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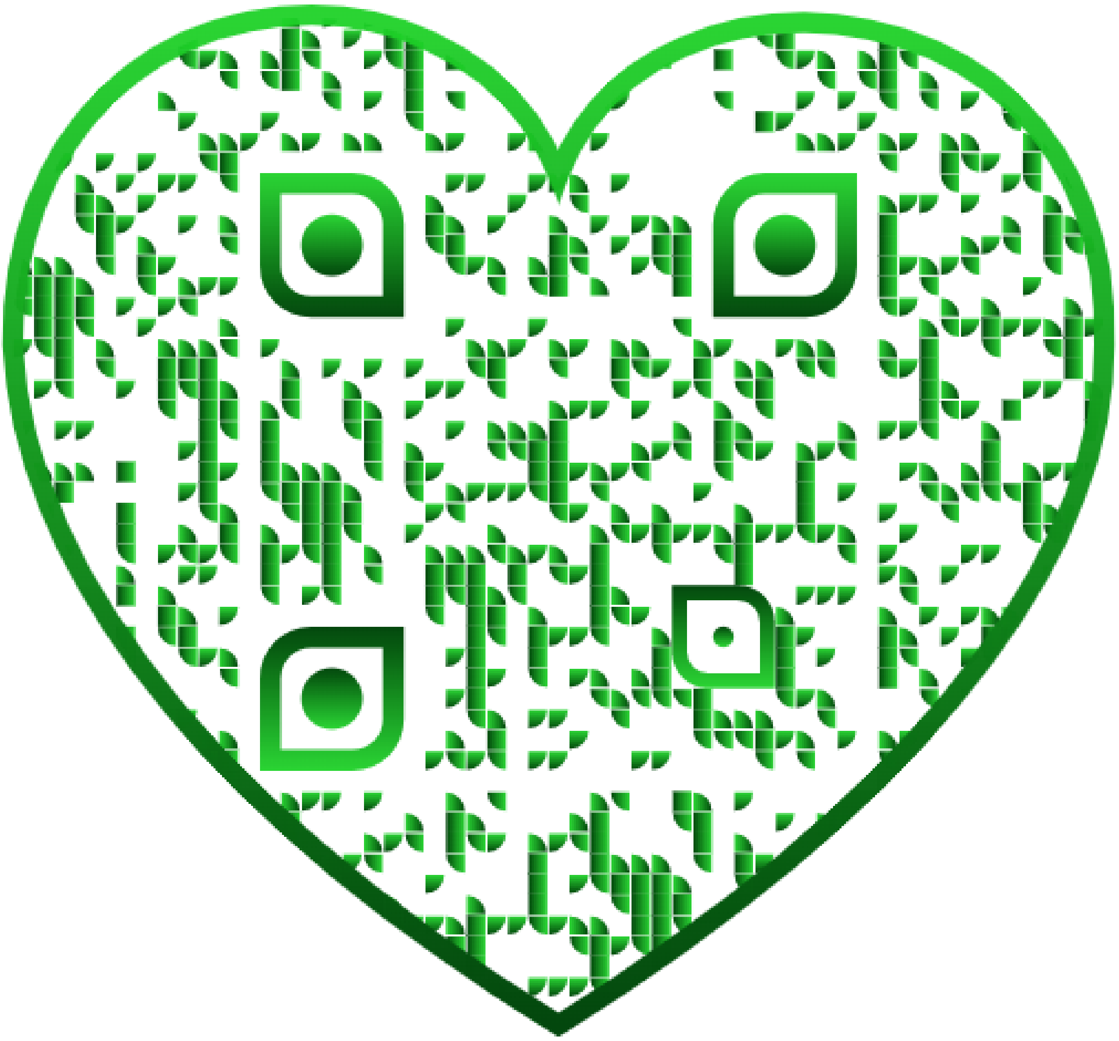
American Cinematographer

Song Sung Blue

Amy Vincent, ASC



December 2025 The International Publication of the American Society of Cinematographers

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Frankenstein
Dan Laustsen, ASC, DFF

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Wicked: For Good

Alice Brooks, ASC

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Bugonia

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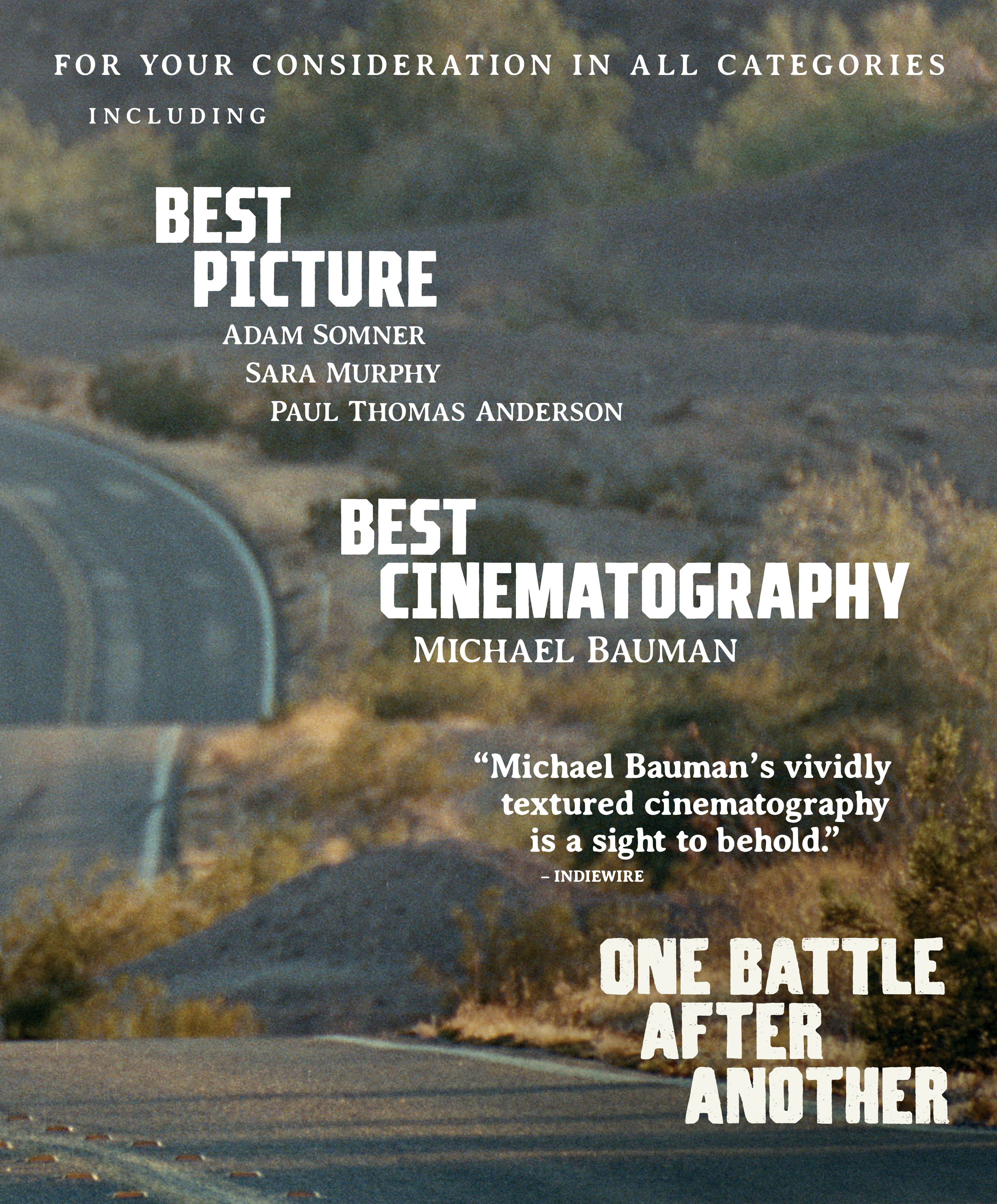

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ONE BATTLE AFTER ANOTHER

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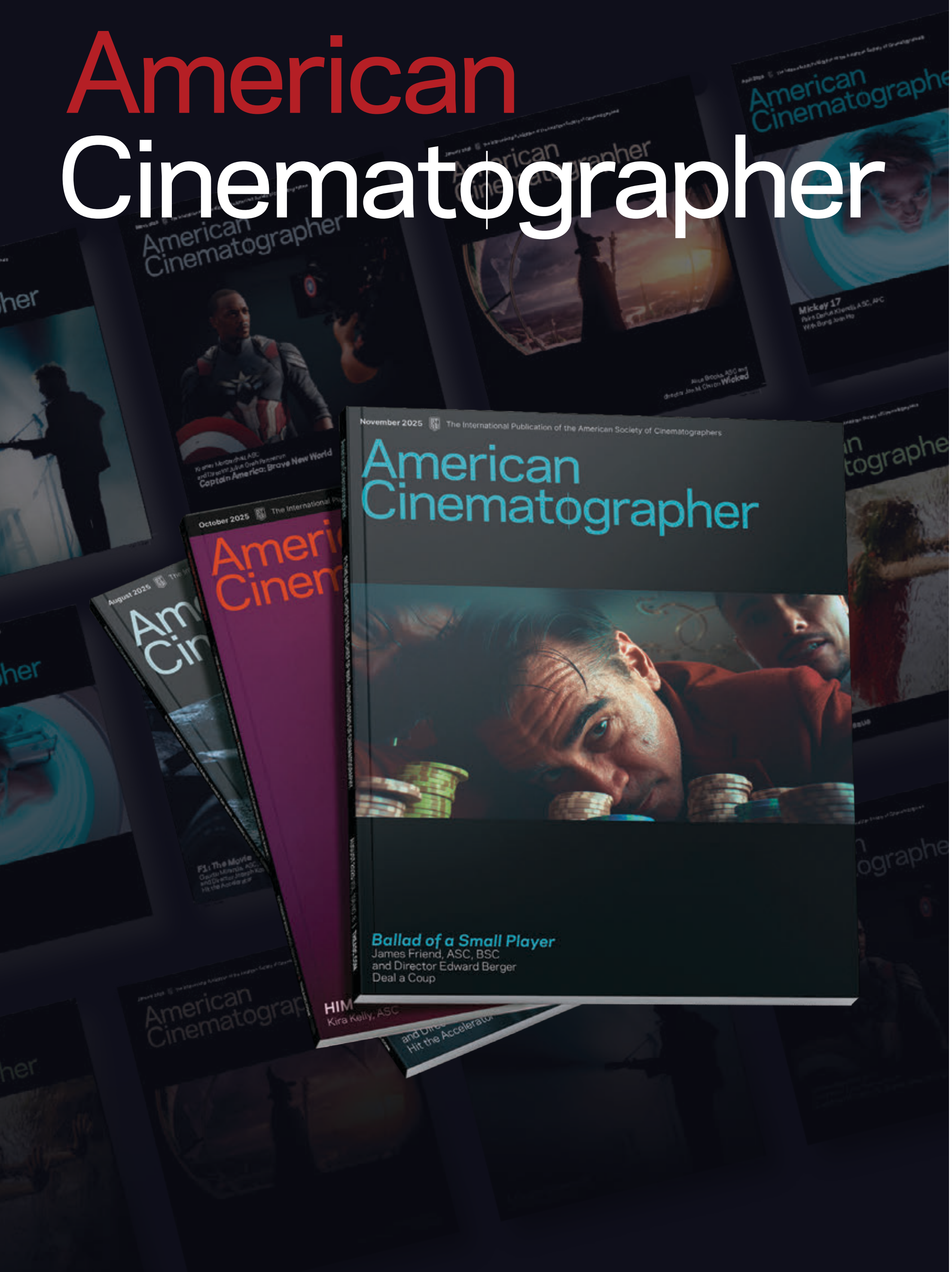
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October 2025
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— SEAN BAKER
Academy Award-winning director of *Anora*

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President's Desk

PORTRAIT BY RUBY BELL.

Welcome to the December issue of *American Cinematographer*.

It's been a busy month for the ASC, with fabulous Master Classes conducted in Mexico City and Los Angeles on shooting film and other topics. Congratulations to the instructors, sponsors, and ASC members who taught and attended — and, of course, to our hardworking staff.

Johnny Simmons, ASC and Henner Hofmann, ASC, AMC, from our wonderful Vision Committee, delivered an amazing presentation about diversity and representation. Michael Goi, ASC, ISC hosted a presentation on AI, specifically about the need for cinematographers to educate themselves as they grow more involved with the daunting, constantly changing technologies. We all should be aware of and familiar with new advancements so we can evolve to our full capacity as modern visual storytellers.

A few months back, I had the opportunity to participate in a Zoom panel run by Natasha Braier, ASC, ADF called "Cameramamas." Comprised of many ASC and BSC members who are mothers, including myself, we had a great interactive discussion with an audience of working mothers, prospective working mothers, and women who wanted to learn about the different ways we've navigated having both a family and career in our busy lives.

There were many varied stories of how women coped with balancing time and bringing up children, while also being able to give their attention and efforts to their profession, and sometimes struggled to make it all work. It's worth noting that this is not strictly a women's or mothers' issue; it's ironic that men don't get asked how they juggle these challenges, while women are asked about this a lot! This is an overall working-parent topic that impacts every industry. It is very possible to have children and a career, and to succeed at both, but it's a balancing act that comes down to an individual's situation and the support the family can receive.

Speaking from my own personal experience, I was very lucky to have a husband who wanted to be full-time dad — just as many men have been lucky to have partners who are stay-at-home caregivers — as I went back to work when our daughter, Ruby, was in her first year. For us, it was about the ways in which we juggled our schedules, and the effort I put in to be a good mother and a dedicated cinematographer.

On a joyous closing note, *American Cinematographer* was recently nominated for seven (7) Eddie Awards by *Folio:* magazine, the publishing industry's bellwether, and our technical editor, ASC associate member Jay Holben, won for his superb monthly column Shot Craft. Eddie Awards represent editorial excellence, and seven is the highest number of nominations we've ever received in a single year. So, congratulations to Jay and the rest of our editorial team! What an absolute honor for our beloved publication.

Best regards,

Mandy Walker
ASC President

It is very possible to have children and a career, and to succeed at both, but it's a balancing act that comes down to an individual's situation and the support the family can receive.

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Shot Craft

By Jay Holben

Out of Thin Air: Working on Spec

IMAGES COURTESY OF ANNA GUDBRANDS AND ESTEFANIA KRÖL.

As you set out on your path to a career in cinematography, a common (and paradoxical) frustration tends to be that no one will give you the opportunity to shoot the kind of material you want to shoot without your having shot it before! A step toward circumventing that, which I've long advocated, is to build your reel for the type of career you want to have. Do you want to shoot car commercials? Then you'd better have amazing examples of car work on your reel. Do you want to shoot the next *Game of Thrones*? Have impressive examples of medieval drama on your reel. How do you do that when you haven't yet been hired to shoot those types of projects? *Spec work*, or material created on speculation.

Stills from a spec commercial shot by Anna Gudbrands and directed by Estefania Kröl.

That means you're not paid to do it. In most cases, in fact, *you* are paying to get it made — without a specific client, studio or network behind you.

In the early days of my career, when I was a gaffer looking to work as a cinematographer, the spec was my main tool. I shot specs every chance I could — commercials, shorts, even just single shots — to help flesh out my reel. *You know what would be great here? A steaming cup of coffee in a warm kitchen* ... and that became my next spec shot to do.

Of course, in those days, spec work required getting my hands on a 35mm camera package, grip and lighting, and motion-picture film stock, and then working deals for film developing and telecine. It's a *lot* easier today thanks to high-end digital cameras, LED lighting and at-home editing systems that can work with native footage.

It also behooves you to partner with friends. Connect with fellow filmmakers and work toward a mutual goal. When I was coming up in Hollywood, I was lucky to have some amazing filmmaker friends and collaborators. One was Christopher Probst, ASC. Whenever we could, we'd pool resources and share opportunities

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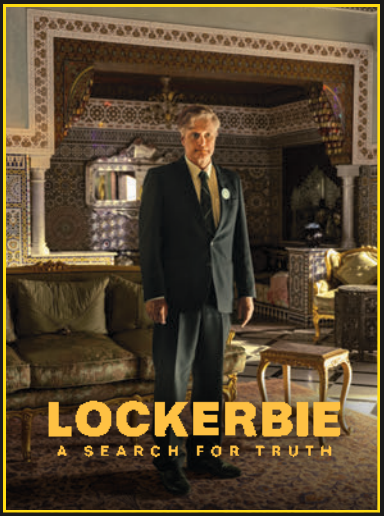
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Top: Holben directing the short film *Terminus*, shot by Kaity Williams. Middle: Behind the scenes of the short film *Descent*, directed by Holben. At the camera is Christopher Probst, ASC. Bottom: A late-night spec spot shot in the author's living room on 35mm film.

for both of us to shoot spec material. When I shot, Chris was my AC, and when he shot, I was his gaffer. We supported each other, even when the only time we had to shoot was somewhere between 2-5 a.m. (between wrap of one job and call on the next)! Jamie Neese was another friend and collaborator on many spec projects as I built my reel.

It's hard to do alone, but not impossible. If you're looking for commercial work, shooting tabletop or product shots in your living room means you're not relying on anyone else to help move your career forward. There were many times when I would go to the grocery store, pick out a random product, and figure out a commercial for it that I could do on my own at home. Those experiments not only built my reel, but also taught me how to design a look from scratch and communicate ideas visually; they helped me refine my skills as a cinematographer.

Spec Commercials

The spec commercial is the most traditional form of spec work. It's creating an ad for a product without having any official association with the company that makes it. It's a "fake" commercial, more or less, and when you put the result on your website, if you've used a real brand name, you should identify it as such to make it clear that the piece wasn't created on behalf of the company. Alternately, you can avoid any issues by making up a fictional brand name.

Recently, Icelandic cinematographer Anna Gudbrands — who works in commercials and music videos — decided to pursue more car work, and to add relevant shots to her reel, she used her own vintage Jaguar to shoot a spec commercial. She collaborated with Argentinian director Estefania Kröl, who had a strong vision for the spot: a driver's transformation into the classic car's feral feline namesake.

"The budget for this spec consisted of a full tank of gas, multiple pots of coffee at the Chateau Marmont while prepping, and then snacks and non-alcoholic beer while we were working in post," explains Gudbrands. "We shot this with an iPhone 16, DV cam, and two vintage Sony action cameras that I found on eBay. These cameras were a deliberate creative and practical choice. We wanted to be able to easily move the cameras around and also achieve a more raw and 'alive' image for the visuals, to go with the vintage aesthetic of the car. Lighting-wise, Rosco kindly

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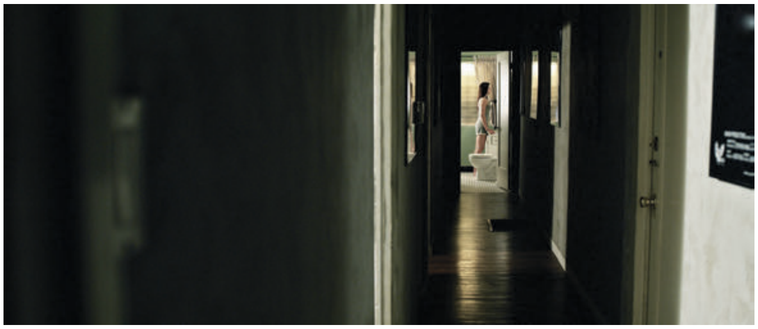

From top: Jack Wallace in a spec trailer for *Tis It the Season?*, written and directed by Jason Gedrick and photographed by Christopher Probst, ASC; Becka Adams and Brett Hargrave in an actors' reel scene titled "Hiding Place"; Adams in the short film *Alone*, photographed by Jayson Crothers; another shot from *Alone*.

lent us their excellent DMG Dash lights. We had two of those kits, which could be easily attached to the interior of the car and also worked well for car exteriors, and with that setup we could be portable and quick. Working with restrictions can be freeing, even a blessing in some ways. To make a project work with limited resources, you must think in highly creative ways and know how to solve problems with the tools you have.

"Specs are a great way to showcase your creativity and abilities to tell stories for brands you love, and to collaborate with directors on projects you're both working towards," she continues. "I love shooting commercials, and doing specs allows me to flex my creative muscles, take risks and work with visuals I may not be able to try out on a regular commercial shoot. As we know, there can be a reluctance to hire a DP unless they've done a similar project before. Taking the reins and shooting a spec is a great way to showcase your abilities and vision."

While AI-generated visuals are starting to encroach on some commercial work, there's still no substitute for the authenticity and tactile control of real cinematography — especially when you're building your personal voice through spec work.

Narrative Specs

Delving into narrative-spec work can seem more daunting, but one technique I've used successfully is to collaborate with actors who are looking to build their reels as well. They hired me to write, direct and shoot a scene for them — a scene that felt lifted out of a longer piece — and in turn, I would get new material for my reel. It's a lot easier to tackle a two- or three-minute scene than an entire short film, pilot or feature, and after working with multiple clients, you can find yourself with an impressively varied sample portfolio featuring all sorts of looks and genres. The low fee I'd charge the actors helped me pay for the production, and we'd both get something really helpful out of it.

To make those projects, I'd sit down with the actor and ask, "What's your dream project?" And they'd say, "I really want a starring role on a forensic series ..." Then I'd write a scene that felt like it was pulled from *CSI*, *NCIS* or *Dexter*, and light it and shoot it in that style, thereby demonstrating I was capable of creating those looks. Meanwhile, the actor would get the scene to sell *their* talents.

The Agent's Perspective

Louiza Vick, a partner and co-head of the Motion Pictures Department at Worldwide Production Agency — which represents craft department heads, including cinematographers — shared her perspective on spec work: "When you're talking about short films or a spec pilot, it's always been about the director you're going to be working with and the material. If the director is someone the DP feels really excited about — they have a shared sensibility, a shared vision and a gut feeling that this might be someone they could form a long-lasting relationship with — then doing a short film, a proof of concept or a spec pilot is worth the investment. I wouldn't advise a DP to necessarily invest financially unless they have overall creative control as a producer, but if you're talking about donating time, I think when you're building your career, there is a certain investment you have to put in — and it's an investment in yourself. It helps you build a reel, build a network, and it potentially

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Above, left and right: More shots from Gudbrands and Kröl's spec commercial. Below, left: Kathleen Wilhoite attempts to wake Dan Lauria from a comatose state in *Tis It the Season?*. Below, right: Keleigh de la Cruz and Matthew Dugger perform a scene from a spec project titled *The Ex*.

leads to other opportunities, especially if it's a proof of concept. Maybe the DP who shoots the proof of concept can also shoot the feature.

"I agree with the idea that you should put on your reel the kind of work you want to be hired for, especially when you want to do something you haven't necessarily done," she adds. "Cinematography is a visual medium. So, a way to try to get yourself hired on something you want is to showcase that you can do it."

Pushing Boundaries

Shooting spec work is also a phenomenal way to push your boundaries. Try out new equipment, test out concepts and storytelling techniques you've never tried before. Explore in an environment where you won't get fired if it doesn't work out! It is precisely when times are slow — during those breaks between jobs — that you should continue to exercise the creative muscles and *create*. Continue to expand the reel, the resumé, the website, and even just material for your social media.

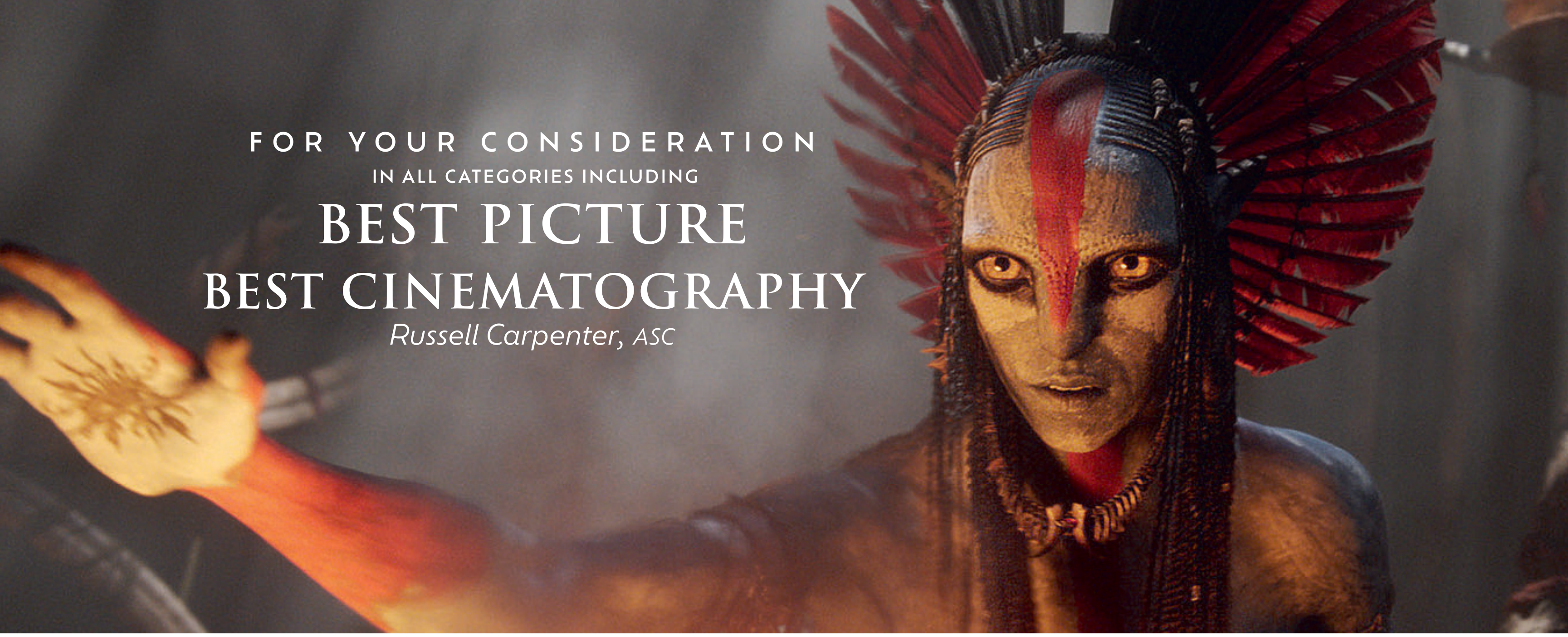
"It's definitely very important that you keep moving forward [in slow times], and it's certainly better to stay positive and stay inspired," says Vick. "Some spec work is worth doing. The main caveat is that it's usually very low or no pay, but could be a way to build new relationships, and short films and specs don't necessarily have a massive platform; shorts usually go to festivals or are just purposefully used as a proof of concept."

Discipline and Discoveries

It's important to treat every spec like a real job; that discipline carries over when the real gig comes. Build a crew, make a plan, and test your lighting well before production. And remember that specs aren't just a young cinematographer's game; even seasoned cinematographers like Gudbrands use them to reinvent their reels, explore new genres or experiment with emerging technology. I still do spec work, especially testing new equipment and concepts, and they continue to help me refine my skills.

A bonus of spec work is what you can discover about yourself. Every test, every experiment, every late-night setup is another step toward mastering your craft. When the phone's not ringing, pick up the camera. The work you do for free is often the work that pays off the most. I can trace every big opportunity I've ever had back to something I did either out of curiosity or to support another filmmaker. Specs are where you prove — to yourself most of all — that you can create beauty and story out of thin air. And sometimes, that's exactly what a producer, director or agency wants.

TOP IMAGES COURTESY OF ANNA GUDBRANDS AND ESTEFANIA KRÖL. BOTTOM IMAGES COURTESY OF JAY HOLBEN.



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The Divine Spark of *Frankenstein*

Dan Laustsen, ASC, DFF reunites with director Guillermo del Toro and their collaborators to reanimate a horror classic.

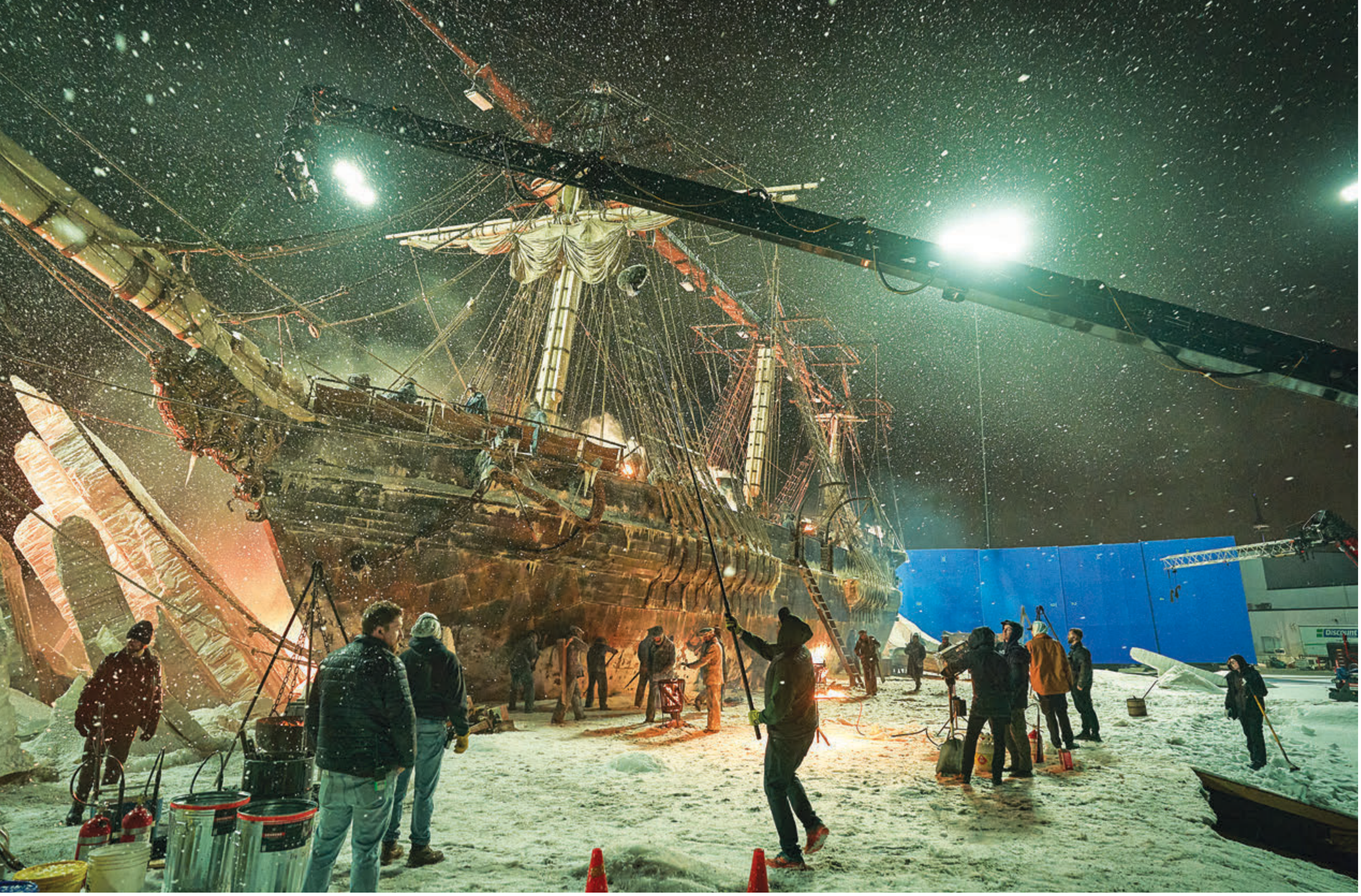
By Joe Fordham

The Creature (Jacob Elordi) approaches his creator, Victor Frankenstein (Oscar Isaac), aboard an Arctic vessel.

The unnamed Creature in Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* has appeared in more than 400 feature films, but for many, the quintessential rendering is Universal's 1931 *Frankenstein*, directed by James Whale; photographed by Arthur Edeson, ASC; and starring Boris Karloff as the monster. The film had a profound effect on filmmaker Guillermo del Toro. "For a Catholic boy, it was catnip," he says.

"One of the glorious things you can access as a kid are the hagiography, lives of the saints," del Toro continues. "Those included cephalophores that carry their [severed] head under their arm. Saints were skinned alive, flayed and fried. Neither H.P. Lovecraft nor Edgar Allan Poe could conjure so much spiritual and physical horror! That's what did it for me. I saw myself as the Creature; I felt as out-of-place, as frail, as alien to my reality of a male boy growing up in Mexico as it felt the monster was in that reality. He became my patron saint."

Del Toro's passion infused the production of the Netflix feature *Frankenstein* — and enriched the project for cinematographer Dan Laustsen, ASC, DFF, who was collaborating with the director for the fifth time. (They most recently partnered on *Nightmare Alley*; *AC* Jan. '22.) The new



TOP PHOTO BY KEN WORONER. ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF NETFLIX.

adaptation divides Shelley's narrative into the stories of Victor Frankenstein (Oscar Isaac) and the Creature (Jacob Elordi), bookended by an Arctic exploration that encounters the pair in the frozen north.

The goal, Laustsen says, was "a classic-looking movie using modern-day techniques. We knew we'd be using 20Ks, Dinos, LRX Raptors and heavy tungsten lights — but Guillermo and I wanted to use single-source lighting in the way a lot of older movies did. That was our first conversation about how the movie should look."

From top: The setup for the stranded ship and the onscreen image.

The filmmakers explored designs with mood boards and established a base of operations at Cinespace Studios in Toronto while scouting locations in the United Kingdom. The National Wallace Monument in Scotland inspired Frankenstein's laboratory. "Something about the shape of that tower spoke to Guillermo," recalls production designer Tamara Deverell. "He had the idea that Victor's lab was an abandoned municipal water tower. It was very different from other Frankenstein adaptations, but thematically, it fit the idea of water representing life, and it connected to a lake below that the Creature could use to escape. And the physical nature of the extremely tall tower worked for Victor harnessing lightning [to animate the Creature]."

A 24mm Emphasis

As concepts took shape, del Toro and Laustsen selected a camera package similar to that of *Nightmare Alley*, using an Arri Alexa 65 — with Tiffen Black Pro-Mist filtration fitted in the internal ND slot — but this time turning to Leitz Thalia 65 lenses. "Guillermo and I both wanted to shoot very wide angles, so it was important to have a camera that had a very big sensor," Laustsen notes. "We ended up shooting 90 percent of the movie with the 24mm Thalia, which is super-wide in this format, and we shot the whole movie at T4.

"The combination of Alexa 65 and Thalia lenses was fantastic," the cinematographer continues. "They're such high-quality lenses you don't get any flare, and there is so much detail. Sometimes it was a little too sharp. The Black Pro-Mist in the camera allowed us a little flare

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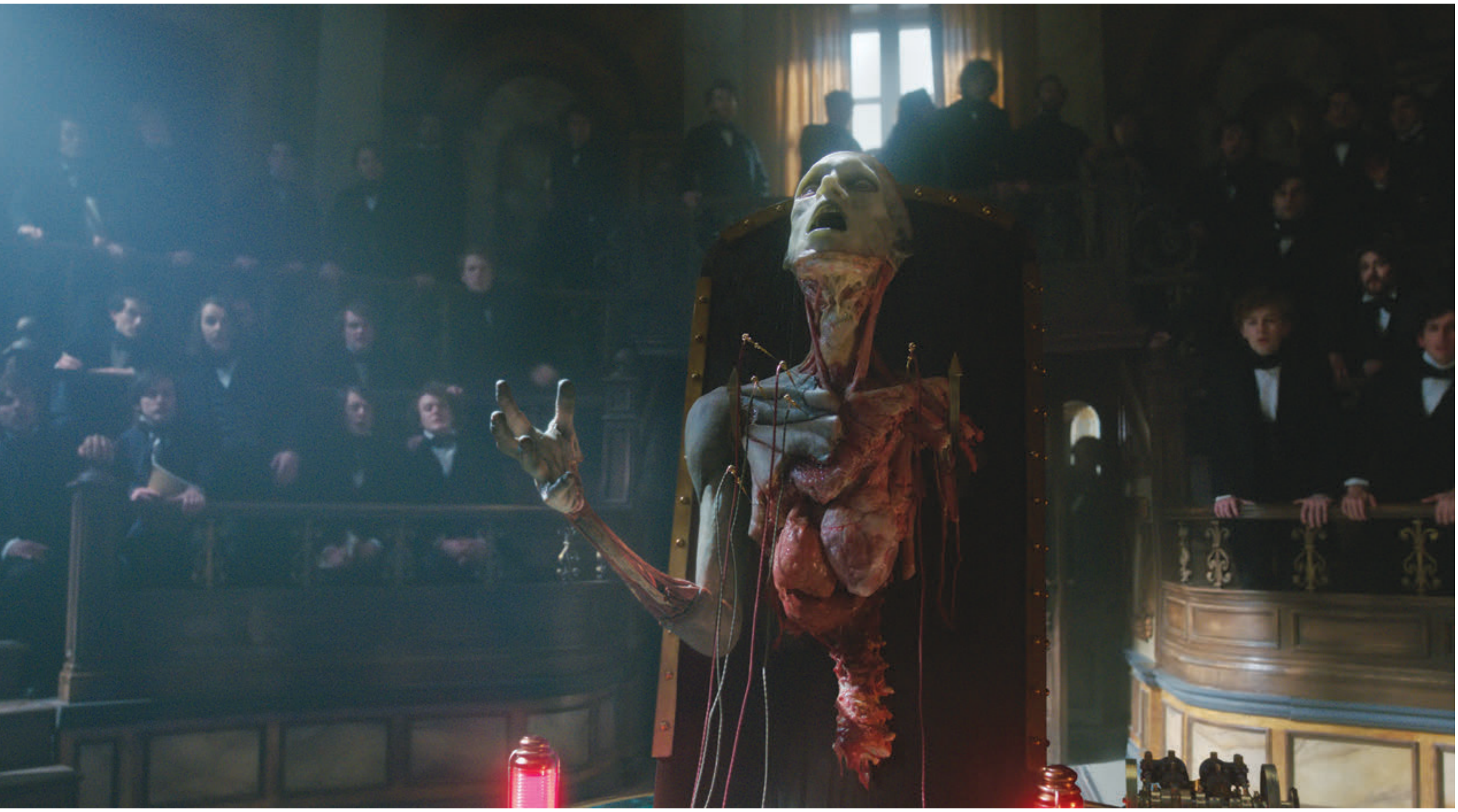

BOTTOM PHOTO BY KEN WORONER.

and bloom in highlights, but our images had rich blacks with bright highlights."

Single camera was the norm across 110 days of filming, with contingency backups. "Dan used four Alexa 65s, one at a time," explains 1st AC Doug Lavender. "That way, we always had a camera ready in each of our shoot modes — telescopic crane, Steadicam and jib arm, and one always on standby."

The neoclassical residence Gosford House in East Lothian was an inspirational resource. "That location had deep blood reds that Guillermo likes," says Deverell. "We see that in the bed of Victor's mother [Mia Goth], and our costume designer, Kate Haley, applied it to costumes. The staircase in Gosford House had a lot of white and pink marble. I knew Guillermo was not a fan of pink, but when I showed him photos lit in Dan's style of natural light, he said, 'That's it! We have to see this place.' And that led to our color palette for the Frankenstein villa."

Narrative elements suggested a thematic color language. Del Toro explains, "We start in a limbo with blue, gold and white. We then show Victor's childhood in red, black and white. The red, which represents his mother, continues as the defining color of his quest. Blue represents his father [Charles Dance]; his brother, William [Felix Kammerer]; and [his patron,] Harlander [Christoph Waltz]. It's the story of a man frozen as a child, when he lost his mother. As Victor relays his story as an adult, all the colors come in — yellows, purples, violets, pinks — because it's a man remembering."

Additionally, color motifs help delineate Goth's dual role: She also portrays Victor's sister-in-law, Elizabeth, whose fascination with etymology is reflected in her green satin dresses. "Green is a beautiful, strong color, but it also can feel dangerous," Laustsen says. "We applied that green to the color of the sets, which came from Guillermo and our discussions about lighting. One of the keys with strong colors is that exposure has to be right-on. For example, we used Steel Blue light a lot, but that could change dramatically with exposure. If we tried to push the

Top: At the Royal College of Medicine, Victor demonstrates his experimental techniques for reanimating the deceased. Above: Dan Laustsen, ASC, DFF and director Guillermo del Toro discuss a shot on the Royal College set.

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Top: As Victor's ambitions lead to harrowing consequences, his recurring dreams of a "Dark Angel" become nightmares. Above: The scientist is startled by a sudden sign of life from one of his experiments.

green, the Steel Blue would disappear into blue, but when that Steel Blue was correct, it was a gorgeous color."

The filmmakers took a naturalistic approach to period locations. U.K. gaffer Dave Sinfield and his team lit Frankenstein-estate interiors with tungsten-balanced Dinos, 18Ks, 24Ks or HMIs arrayed outside windows. "We kept our footprint to a minimum inside the National Trust mansions and estates," Lavender recalls. "Using bigger and well-shaped light through windows and doors gave the camera so much freedom; we could move from a wide to a close-up in one continuous move in many cases without relighting." On night interiors, double-wick candles created natural amber glows and were combined sparingly with LEDs for fireplaces enhanced with VFX.

Visual-effects supervisor Dennis Berardi of Herne Hill Media oversaw a broad range of digital enhancements. Herne Hill Media led the initiative with environmental additions and animation and were joined by Industrial Light & Magic, Ticket VFX, The Hot Spring and Magic Camera Company. Creature designer Mike Hill, a contributor to del Toro's *The Shape of Water* (*AC,* Jan. '18), realized the Creature as a prosthetic makeup.

Creating the Creature

The Creature's design sprang from a reexamination of the character. Hill observes, "The world has such an image of the pop-culture version of the classic, square-headed, green-skinned monster. Guillermo and I adore that, and it's part of my psyche, but this had to be different. My first thought was to imagine what I could have created in the period."

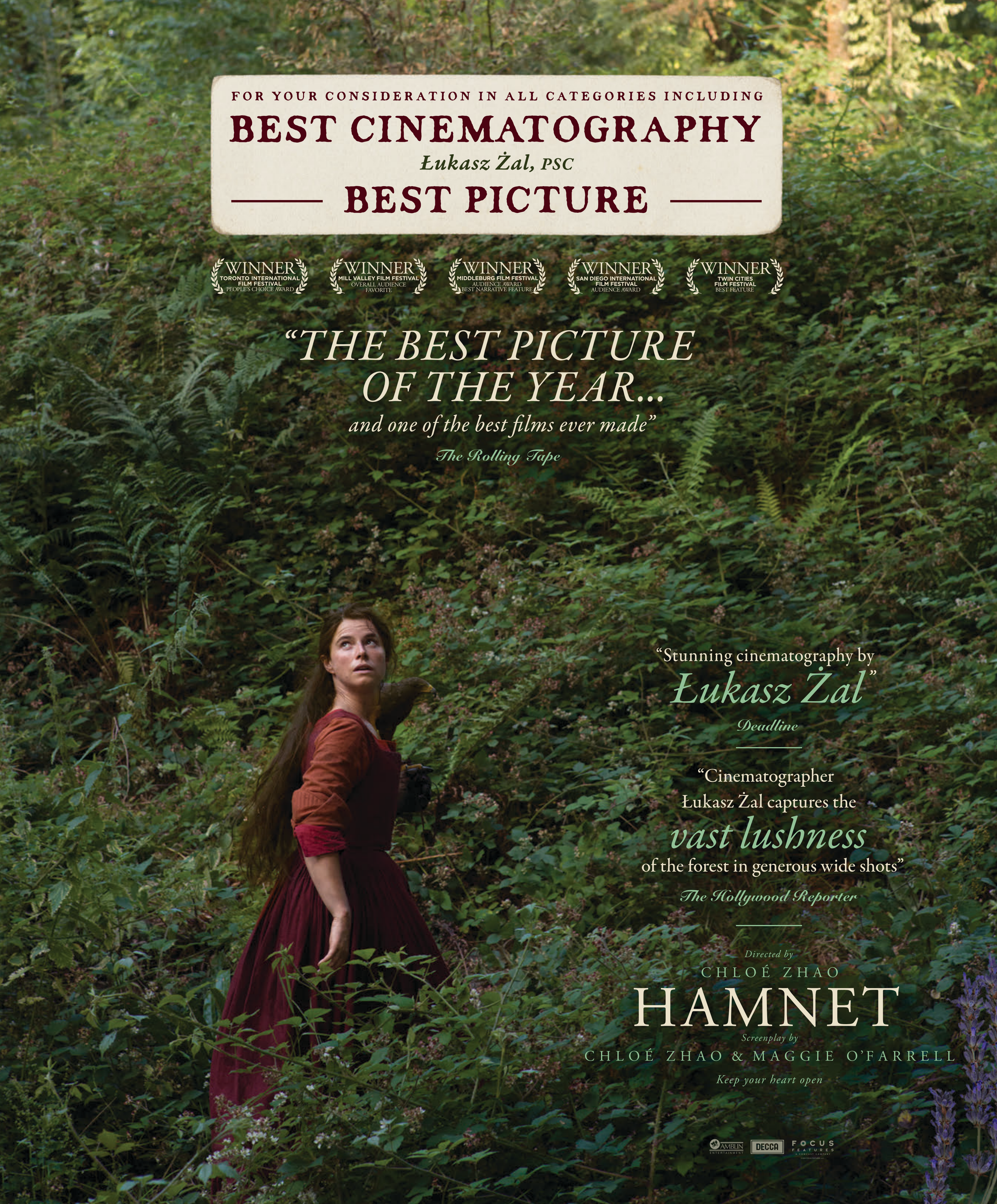
Del Toro supplied a reference: a classical statue of St. Bartholomew's flayed anatomy to illustrate surgical style. "Victor has been thinking about this experiment for 20, 30 years," the director says. "He's not going to make this look like an accident victim in the ICU. I wanted it to feel almost Art Deco. For the Creature's head, for instance, we tried to follow phrenology diagrams from the 1800s, giving it a designed beauty, avoiding diagonal [incisions], making them more rounded, less haphazard. The Creature needed to look newborn, not repaired."

Hill began with pencil renders and digital overlays before progressing to clay. He then photographed sculptures and continued to add Photoshop details on photos taken of actors being considered for the role. A last-minute casting change — resulting from the 2023 WGA strike and an actor's scheduling conflict — necessitated retooling the makeup to Elordi's muscular, 6'5" frame. Nine weeks before shooting, Hill commissioned full-body scans of Elordi in Australia and used the 3D data as basis for revisions, with sculptural assistance from Noah Rivers. Lab technician Frank Ippolito then molded prosthetics that Hamer FX generated in custom-tinted silicone. "Guillermo wanted the Creature to be mainly gray," Hill says. "I wanted to differentiate areas with colors, and I went deep." Hill added shading that took inspiration from Mary Shelley's novel, which described the Creature as having yellow skin. "I first applied a pale, dead, yellow color [that was] more yellow in certain parts. As a nod to Karloff, I made some areas sky-gray-blue, which [Universal makeup-department head] Jack Pierce had used on Karloff. I made separate bands of color on the shoulders, as if Frankenstein had dyed those to help piece the Creature together in color-by-numbers style. That helped avoid 'Hollywood zombie' colors. I wanted to make this a much cleaner version of a living dead man — more ivory and statuesque."

The goal, Laustsen says, was "a classic-looking movie using modern-day techniques. We knew we'd be using 20Ks, Dinos, LRX Raptors and heavy tungsten lights — but Guillermo and I wanted to use single-source lighting in the way a lot of older movies did."

Creature makeups comprised 13 head and neck pieces and 29 full-body prosthetics. Five makeup artists attended 10-hour makeup applications, which Megan Many co-keyed with Hill, joined by Michael J. Walsh, Samantha Breault and Richard Redlefsen. Specialty-hair designer Brooke Barker manufactured Creature wigs using long, brown, human hair with a subtle, white-blonde streak. Elordi wore dental prosthetics and a single dark-brown contact lens, which del Toro featured to introduce asymmetry in the Creature's eyes. The first test fitting was a revelation for the team. "When Jacob came in, I no longer cared that our schedule was so short!" Hill continues. "His proportions worked wonderfully, and as soon as we added his wig and teeth, he was into character. It was like Jack Pierce finding Karloff. He was *the* actor for the role, and a consummate professional."

"We shot the Creature as a person," says Laustsen. "Of course, we played with shadows, but the Creature's design and color were so well



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HAMNET

Screenplay by
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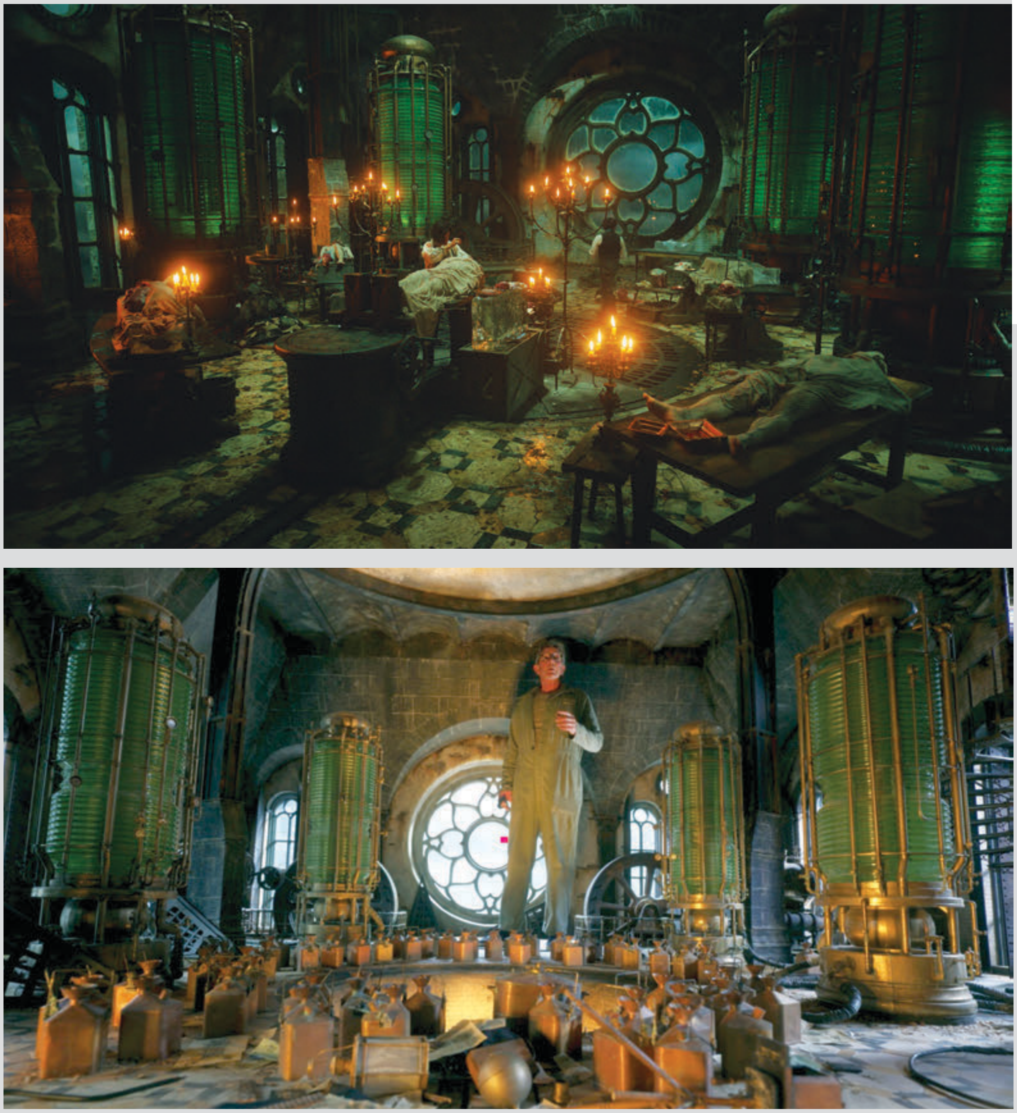
The Frozen North

To establish scenes of the Creature in the Arctic, the production staged a splinter-unit shoot on Lake Nipissing in North Bay, Ontario, Canada. VFX supervisor Berardi accompanied the shoot to capture bracketed exposures of dawn-to-sunset skies. Scenes featuring the Royal Danish

Spotlight on Effects | Miniatures Models

TOP PHOTO BY KEN WORONER.



Top: In a scene shot on the full-size set, Victor examines his work-in-progress at his vast laboratory atop a tower in Scotland. Bottom: Miniature supervisor José Granell surveys the ¼-scale lab that was constructed to help realize the tower's fateful collapse. (To view exterior miniature work on this explosive sequence, see photo on page 30).

Frankenstein's laboratory, a neo-Gothic pinnacle on a rugged Scottish clifftop, took shape in miniature for establishing scenes and for the tower's destruction. Dan Laustsen, ASC, DFF photographed the miniatures — working with miniature supervisor José Granell and Nigel Stone, BSC at The Magic Camera Company — and accompanied Del Toro and VFX supervisor Dennis Berardi for five weeks at White Waltham Airfield in England.

"First, we shot wide shots of the tower outside on a parking lot," says the cinematographer. "We then shot miniature laboratory interiors collapsing. It was a challenge to match the lighting for the miniatures to the full-scale sets, and when shooting miniatures, you have to shoot high speeds at around T11 to get the depth of field. But it was a fantastic experience and so much fun."

The filmmakers covered the miniatures using five Red V-Raptor XLs with Arri Signature Prime lenses and elected to shoot without Laustsen's signature Tiffen Black Pro-Mist filtration. "I wanted to capture as much dynamic range as possible in the miniatures," says Berardi. "I also knew we'd be adding a lot of digital enhancements. We shot takes with the Pro-Mist as reference, but we shot our hero takes clean."

For wide exteriors, Magic Camera Company built a 1⁄40-scale tower, which stood 11'6" tall, surrounded by a 24'x18' landscape. Two additional 1⁄20-scale towers were used for close-up details and for up-angles. VFX then sampled textures in digital set extensions. For scenes wherein Frankenstein causes the tower to explode in flames, technicians rigged more than 120 pyrotechnic events. Rubble then served for VFX composites of the ruined aftermath.

To build a ¼-scale interior of Frankenstein's lab, Granell visited the full-scale sets in Toronto and collected details of the glowing fuel cells and the spiral staircase, which model makers rigged for high-frame-rate destruction. "We worked out frame rates using the rule of thumb of taking the denominator of the scale," Berardi explains. "You multiply that by frame rate, and that gets you in the ballpark. The formula doesn't always work with fire and water, so we did a lot of frame-rate explorations. For instance, we shot the ¼-scale lab interior at around 144 fps [at T11], and that allowed us to force perspective and make it believable. VFX then added digital fire as needed."

— *Joe Fordham*

See an expanded gallery showcasing the production's miniature builds at theasc.com:

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Top: Victor channels a bolt of lightning to bring the Creature to life. Above: Elizabeth (Mia Goth), the fiancée of Victor's brother, forms a bond with the Creature in the tower's cellar.

Navy three-mast explorer ship *Horizon* trapped in the ice were then shot on a 325'-long full-scale mockup of the ship in the parking lot at Cinespace's Marine Terminal. The *Horizon* set extended vertically to the base of the sails and was built on a gimbal that special-effects supervisor Geoff Hill designed to allow sideways motion for scenes in which the Creature shoves against the vessel.

For night shoots, gaffer Michael L. Hall created Steel Blue ambient moonlight by rigging remote-controlled Raptor lights fitted with dichroic filters, along with Creamsource Vortex8s dialed to match them, to a pair of construction cranes off the bow and stern. Each crane carried eight arrays of four Vortex8s with Raptor lights. The rig was controlled by lighting-console operator Desiree Lidon.

"We positioned the cranes at a distance of about 250 feet and a height of approximately 225 feet," Hall says. "On the starboard and port sides of the ship, we used an additional six 125-foot-tall condors with two Vortex arrays with focusable mounts, which we affectionately called 'Small Vikings.' We primarily used the condors for Steel Blue night lighting and occasionally for augmented firelight. On the starboard side, we used 20 single Vortex8s to create firelight and backlight smoke."

Key rigging grip John Billings also rigged LEDs and Rosco DMG Dash lights to assist fill, but key lighting on deck came from live flaming torches. "It was our luck that it was windy — that gave us great drama with the torches," says Laustsen. "The beauty of the live-action flame moving with the actors was so organic. As the wind was changing, the light was changing. We never could have faked that with LEDs."

To aid VFX additions, key grip Robert Johnson rigged Robe iForte FS lights on 30'x30' bluescreens around the ship. VFX later enhanced shipboard scenes using a digital model of the *Horizon* with interactive sails, rigging and environments. Herne Hill used Unreal Engine to previsualize Arctic extensions and explore camera motion for a one-minute aerial approach. "We flew in over the ice and slowly tilted up to reveal the ship," explains Berardi. "Once Guillermo approved that previs, we shot the beginning in North Bay with reference for lighting that Dan approved. We then shot the B-side on our set. There was a fairly large digital component to seam them up, with a lot of rotoscoping. But that's Guillermo's version of filmmaking: Whether it's digital or practical, everything is employed to the highest degree."

All VFX additions mimicked Alexa/Pro-Mist textures. "We shot flame elements with and without the Pro-Mist at various exposures," Berardi explains. "That gave us a sense of what the Pro-Mist was doing. In other scenes, we had digital animation of wolves, and extensions on the exterior of Victor's tower — and I wanted to make sure all of those were true to the Alexa 65, Black Pro-Mist and Thalia lenses. For every lens Dan used, I shot a range of T-stops with Pro-Mist filters — mostly ⅛ Black — on elements with and without filtration. From that, Herne Hill created an algorithm representing the Pro-Mist, and we shared that with ILM and our other VFX studios. Before we added that to shots, VFX images never matched Dan's look."

The Creator's Story

Frankenstein's experiments are first shown in a flashback to London's Royal College of Medicine in 1855. The production constructed the lecture hall onstage as a set of dark benches surrounding Frankenstein's exhibit. Laustsen pierced the gloom with a beam of light that suggests an unseen skylight. "Outside that window, we had three or four 20K Molebeams and some Dinos. That created a 'super highlight,' and then shadows fell into blackness. We used atmosphere to add a third dimension and lift the scene a little, but I used no fill. Ninety-nine percent of that scene was a single-source key."

Victor's experiment — a disembodied human torso and head that responds to electrical input — called for a part-mechanical, part-prosthetic effect. Del Toro supplied reference of an 18th century anatomical sculpture from La Specola natural history museum in Florence. "The corpse had an almost doll-like, wax face," recalls Hill. "I sculpted a realistic version of the face with the quality that Guillermo wanted, and we gave the face remote-control servos and mounted the body on a slant-board, so an operator could work the head while others pumped the lungs and made the heart beat." For a scene of Victor tossing a ball, which the corpse reflexively catches, the effects team rigged a flexible arm and appliance. "Guillermo wanted him to really catch that ball when Oscar threw it," says Hill. "We knew the only way to do that was to bring a human into the act. We hitched the puppet's hand to an actor's hand, while the rest of the actor's arm and body were green. VFX blended the two."

The Lab

Frankenstein's assembly of the Creature happens in his lab in Scotland. As reference for the exterior terrain, del Toro selected Seacliff in East Lothian. VFX conducted photographic surveys of the site and created

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Multiple miniature towers were built for the production. The 1/20-scale version (at right, bottom) was detonated to help create the external view of the explosion.

establishing shots of Victor's tower using miniature and digital elements, including skies modeled after the work of Victorian artist John Atkinson Grimshaw.

"The skies in [Grimshaw's] *A Moonlit Lane* and *Glasgow Docks* had the vibe Guillermo was looking for: moonlit clouds with lots of moody texture," Berardi says. Exteriors of Victor's tower employed an amalgam of composite elements. "We had CG skies and oceans, a miniature tower and Seacliff locations. We shot ground-level scenes at a location north of Toronto with a 20-foot portion of the tower that Tamara built. We digitally extended that to 400 feet." (For more on the production's miniature work, see sidebar, page 26).

Interiors feature Victor's lab atop the tower, where a gaping, circular drain stands beneath a water-drainage chute that resembles a gorgon's head. Wide-angle coverage required most laboratory lighting to be sourced through a circular window with a painted scenic backing. "We continued with the Vortex8s for their punch and IP rating," says Hall. "For the window, we hung eight Raptor lights in a checkerboard pattern, with Steel Blue and dichroic glass filters."

Adds Laustsen, "The great thing with the Raptor was that it had a remote-control head with 18 lights — nine of them were Steel Blue with dichroic filters, and nine of them were tungsten. We could switch between Steel Blue and tungsten in one second."

To simulate light from a cupola atop the tower, the lighting team also rigged 20Ks and Vortex8s, which threw light from catwalks through a honeycomb grid, creating dramatic lighting on the walls. Laboratory key lights were outside the set. "We wanted it to feel like we were shooting into the sun," notes Laustsen. "We could tilt the Raptors up and down and pan them left and right, and we used those to light the walls with Steel Blue that contrasted our warm key light."

Frankenstein's experiments feature four giant, glass cylinders, representing power cells that funnel energy to the Creature. "We built the batteries to resemble period glass," says production designer Deverell. "We tested for months with internal lighting and special effects. The glass was molded plastic that we outsourced with a company that makes large industrial plastic molds. We tested different colors and densities. Then our welders built giant aluminum structures, about 15 feet tall, on wheels."

Storm effects of rain pouring through openings in the tower ceiling required waterproofing cameras and lights. MBS Aquabat fixtures in Frankenstein's batteries were selected for their IP65 rating and their ability to deliver deep red. "We spent a lot of time designing a color-space for those tubes," says Laustsen. "They had to change from green to red and end in big explosions. I'm a big fan of organic lighting, so the special-effects guys pumped smoke into the batteries, which gave us an uneven moving light. In scenes when everything went berserk, we went through the whole palette."

The Cellar

Scenes of the resurrected Creature chained in a white-tiled cellar required another creative lighting solution to enable wide-angle coverage. Daylight streams into the chamber through apertures in the ceiling. To penetrate the gloom, Hall's team hung an Arri T12 with Steel Blue gel above the central hole to create a hard shaft of light. Above each

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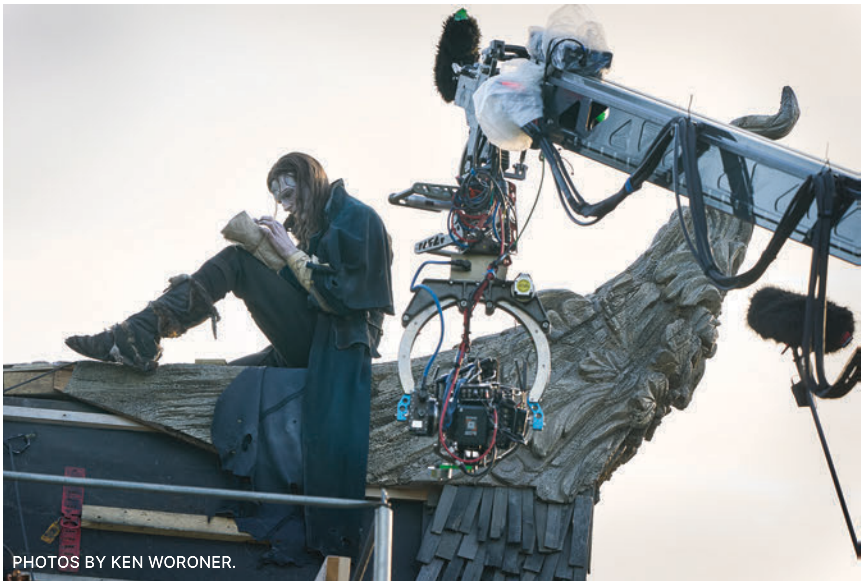

PHOTOS BY KEN WORONER.

Left: The Creature takes refuge in a family's remote countryside millhouse. Right: The production captures a shot of Elordi as he portrays a moment of solace for the Creature, who cradles a gift from the family.

> "The Creature needed to look newborn, not repaired."

surrounding ceiling aperture, a downward-angled 5K Fresnel, surrounded by four Vortex8s, created additional fingers of soft light. Above the central water channel, PAR cans with Steel Blue produced water reflections that shimmered on the ceilings and walls.

The cellar is where the Creature first encounters Elizabeth, who is clad in a lustrous, dark green. "When Mia came in around the columns, we played her silhouetted," Laustsen explains. "We had edgelight on her and her beautiful green dress as she approached the Creature. It's a poetic scene, and we spent a lot of time to create that with light entering from outside."

When Victor tries to destroy his creation, the cellar becomes an inferno. To simulate fire surrounding the Creature, Hill and the SPFX team placed flame bars around Elordi. VFX then shot pyrotechnic elements in a half-scale "black box" set representing cellar geometry. "The fire elements were helpful," says Berardi. "Ultimately, because of the way Guillermo wanted fire to chase toward the Creature, we ended up generating digital fire. That way we could make flames perform, and then we dressed live fire elements into the composites."

Dark Angel, Woodlands and the Arctic

Frankenstein is haunted by fire in recurring dreams that feature a statue of an angel that comes to life in flames. Costume designer Kate Hawley initiated the Dark Angel design with Hill and created a costume for performance artist Roberto Campanella. Laustsen photographed the figure against black using flame bars and interactive LEDs. "Our key light on Isaac was an LED fire effect because of all the fabric on Victor's bed," Laustsen explains. "But we placed real flame bars behind him and real fire outside his bedroom window and shot that at high speed." ILM augmented Dark Angel environments and the character's performance.

In later scenes following the Creature's escape through the countryside, the production shot establishing scenes with Elordi in Toronto woodland locations using natural light and negative fill. "Negative fill was a big deal," says Laustsen. "In all of our exteriors, we used big fly swatters to give us a lot of atmosphere. The beauty of the Creature came from keeping parts of him in shadow."

For the Creature's woodland encounters, ILM animated an inquisitive deer, a horde of mice and a pack of wolves that invade the cottage of a blind miller (David Bradley). "Guillermo carefully choreographed all of those animated moments," says Berardi.

Alpine scenery featured location photography enhanced with scenic material from Kananaskis, Alberta. Berardi scouted mountains with del Toro, Laustsen and Deverell, then shot plates and long-range terrain surveys. Herne Hill then generated photogrammetry that was composited into plates simulating Swiss Alps.

Father and Son

The film returns to the Arctic, where the Creature attacks Victor, who's camping on the ice. The production staged the attack on a backlot and a soundstage. Laustsen recalls, "Lighting in Victor's tent was minimalistic. Inside the tent was a practical oil lamp. We supported that with two small Vortex4s on a flicker effect, and some backlight to see the Creature's shadow on the tent exterior. We used a T12 with Steel Blue gel in front of it to define the shadow. VFX helped us transition from inside the tent to outside on the ice."

Laustsen shot ice exteriors against black, using rim light to assist character separations. VFX added Arctic skies as Victor and the Creature grapple with a burning stick of dynamite. "That scene was all about Grimshaw skies backlit with moonlight," Berardi says. "When the dynamite exploded, we shot a separate explosion element using a Sonotube [a paperboard tube used in construction] that special effects blew up and we used as a composite element, with enhancement."

Back on the *Horizon*, the Creature confronts his creator in the

PHOTOS BY KEN WORONER.

From top: Laustsen adds fill to a scene in the lab featuring Victor and Elizabeth; creature designer Mike Hill (left), Laustsen (middle) and del Toro examine the Creature's prosthetic flesh; production designer Tamara Deverell at work on set.

captain's cabin. "That scene was typical of our lighting," notes Laustsen. "Oscar was lit by lanterns and candles. When the Creature entered, he was lit with Steel Blue coming through the windows. The Creature moves through shadows and then, when he sits next to his father, there's dramatic contrast, warm on the father with the son in the cold. We had to be precise because that only worked if the actors hit their light. The Creature then leans into his father's warm light. It's a powerful scene.

"Guillermo and I are so in sync," Laustsen adds. "We do a lot of preparation, but we don't talk too much about specifics. His vision is strong and beautiful, but his focus is on the drama, and when the drama is bigger, it's important to make it visually beautiful. I like to paint with light and ride with the camera, and Guillermo does that so well. He understands the power of moving the camera and telling the story with light." ⌽

Watch our Clubhouse Conversations *interview with Dan Laustsen, ASC, DFF here:*

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Wicked: For Good Goes Over the Rainbow

Alice Brooks, ASC and director Jon M. Chu lean into a multi-colored palette for the epic conclusion of their two-part musical fantasy.

By Mark Dillon

In *Wicked: For Good* — the second part of the 2024 feature *Wicked* — green-skinned outcast Elphaba (Cynthia Erivo) embraces the Wicked Witch identity thrust upon her by Madame Morrible (Michelle Yeoh), and Glinda "the Good" (Ariana Grande) remains in Oz to support the secretly powerless Wizard (Jeff Goldblum) and bring cheer to Ozians. Picking up where the first film (*AC* Jan. '25) left off, *Wicked: For Good* establishes its darker tone in the opening scene, in which Elphaba uses her magical powers to free animals from their shackles and is chased by the Wizard's flying monkeys.

Director of photography Alice Brooks, ASC says that conceiving and executing the story — spanning a total runtime of 4 hours and 58 minutes across both films — was an exhilarating challenge. "We shot both films simultaneously, and sometimes scenes from each were shot on the same day," she explains. "Although that approach was difficult at times, it had its advantages. Every department crafted not only a distinct visual and emotional arc for each film, but also a cohesive throughline so that, when viewed together, both films share one visual heartbeat."

Principal photography began in December 2022 and wrapped in January 2024, a span that included a considerable break imposed by the WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes. Several days of additional photography took place in May of this year. The production had England's not-quite-completed Sky Studios Elstree to itself for extensive set builds, while additional work took place at Elstree Studios and Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden. Backlot sets were constructed on farmland in Ivanhoe, and location work was carried out across the U.K.

Expressive Colors

Color plays an integral role in the storytelling, and required more than two years of pre-prep and 18 weeks of prep; director Jon M. Chu worked with Brooks and production designer Nathan Crowley to determine how they would use it. In addition to studying every cinematic iteration of the story, notably *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), shot by Harold Rosson, ASC, and *The Wiz* (1978), shot by Oswald Morris, BSC, they drew inspiration from L. Frank Baum's *Oz* books. "Every paragraph has a rich color description, and color means something in Oz," Brooks says. "We started mapping out the color of objects, from the Yellow Brick Road to the shade of the green walls of Emerald City. But I also wanted a rainbow palette of light and to give each color symbolic significance."

Red light, she explains, is the color of regret. It appears in the burning glow of the slippers donned by Elphaba's ill-fated sister, Nessarose (Marissa Bode), that allow her to rise from her wheelchair and float in the air. Orange light, representing Elphaba's transformation, is prominent in the number "No Good Deed," as Elphaba fully embraces her identity as the Wicked Witch of the West.

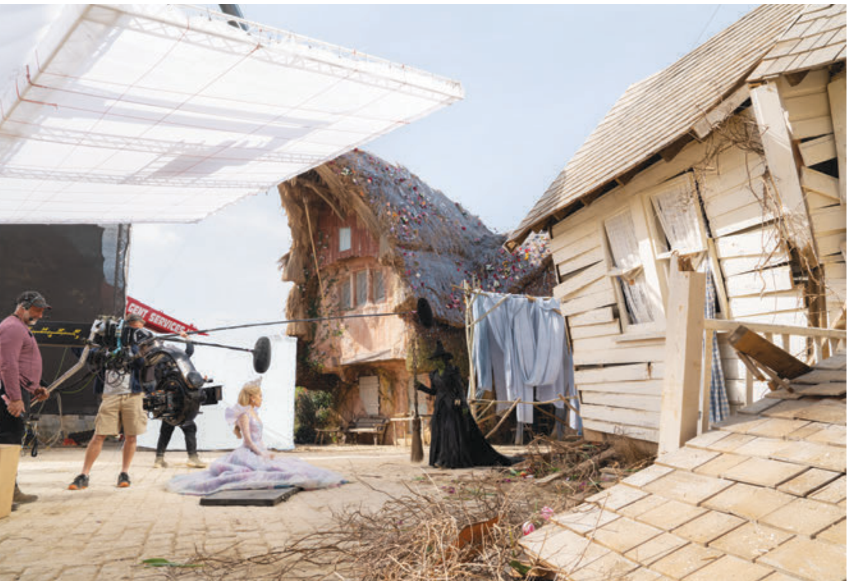
UNIT STILLS BY GILES KEYTE. ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES.

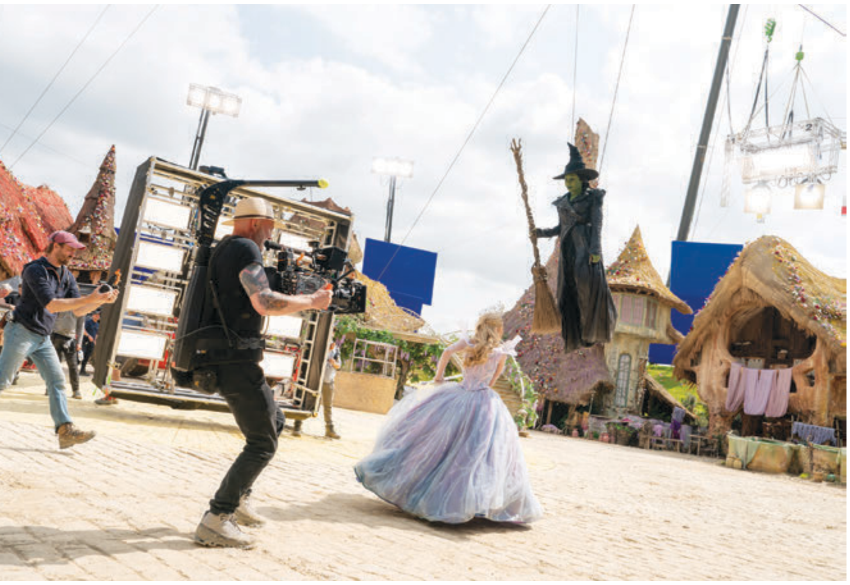
BEWARE THE WICKED WITCH

Opposite: Glinda the Good Witch (Ariana Grande) travels in her pink bubble. This page, above: Glinda and her former friend Elphaba (Cynthia Erivo) find themselves at odds. Below: The Wizard of Oz (Jeff Goldblum) attempts to influence the "wicked" witch.

Yellow light, the color of Glinda's intuition and power, figures in a flashback to a childhood party revealing how she always yearned for magical abilities. "We have yellow flowers everywhere and push yellow light through them to give the scene a glow," Brooks notes. When the magical Grimmerie spellbook finally opens for Glinda, that same hue illuminates her face.

Gaffer David Smith achieved much of Brooks' "rainbow palette" using LED lighting. "They're 8-by-4 feet and similar to a LiteMat," he says. "Across our many stages, we rigged a combination of 2-by-1 panels, including Cineo Quantum Studio units, ECL panels, and Vortex8s," he explains. "On the floor, we used a mix of "Candy Lights" — designed and





From top: Elphaba makes an unpleasant discovery after a house falls from the sky in Munchkinland; capturing the witches' confrontation; Erivo is held aloft on wires as A-camera/Steadicam operator Karsten Jacobsen shoots the action with the help of A-camera 1st AC Lewis Hume.

built by my team — and inflatable Pipe lights, which are lightweight and easy to reposition, offering great versatility on set."

Lighting the Actors

While Glinda's face is brightly displayed in the opening number, Elphaba is found in the shadows of Oz formed by overhead sources falling on her witch's hat. This gives her countenance a touch of menace, and the filmmakers expanded the brim of her hat in the second film to amplify the effect. "The shadow line on her face falls right around the bottom of her nose, and she's green, which created challenges," Brooks says. "I needed to find the right balance between shadows and seeing her eyes because you want to know every thought going through her head."

Preferred sources for Elphaba and Glinda were Pipe Lighting inflatable LEDs from Germany, especially the bi-color 800-watt Pipe Wide 84s, which are 8'x4' and in egg crates. They could be inflated quickly and were handy for the 360-degree Steadicam shooting the filmmakers often employed. "You can put them wherever you want, [and] you could hold one in one hand," Smith says. "You can use it as a backlight, sidelight, key or fill. They have a creamy texture. If you hang a rag in front of the egg crate, it becomes a nice soft source."

These were used with smaller LEDs wrapped in a homemade diffusion Smith calls "snow," adding, "I put it on everything — tubes, LiteMat Spectrum and Vortex lights." Brooks notes that these small sources "would give us a little light in Elphaba's eye without affecting that shadow line when we lit her from above."

Lighting Glinda, who is fair-skinned with platinum hair and a pale wardrobe, was more about subtracting light. Brooks' favorite shot of the character occurs in a pivotal scene in the Wizard's control room, when Fiyero (Jonathan Bailey), captain of the guard, turns on the Wizard and leaves with Elphaba, choosing her over a heartbroken Glinda. "The long handheld shot of Glinda starts wide and develops into a close-up as she gets close to the lens," the cinematographer recounts. "We had [Prolights EclPanel] space lights with skirts on that set and turned them all off for this shot. All we had on were practicals on the perimeter, and we put a tiny Dedolight on Glinda very low so she got a little ping in her eye." (The practicals to which Brooks refers were dimmable arrays of large, 300-watt bulbs built into the staircase and around the Wizard's control room.)

Tornado Colors

Another important color the filmmakers wanted to emphasize was purple, which Brooks sees as a signifier of consequence, particularly in the fabled tornado that will transport the house of Dorothy from Kansas to Oz. "We were looking at tornado colors, and everything came up green, which we didn't want, of course, because green has a different significance in Oz; it's the color of Elphaba and Emerald City." Instead, she drew on her own history: Her parents had told her that when her mother was pregnant with her, they had emerged from a movie theater and come upon wreckage left behind by a tornado that had just rolled through town. "My dad described the atmosphere as a purple glow," Brooks recalls. "I pitched that idea to Jon and found a photo of a purple storm, and we started testing and getting to what that purple would become."

For the tornado sequences, the actors on set were subjected to huge fans and lighting effects, and then visual-effects artists at Industrial Light & Magic created a CG cyclone. *Wicked* visual-effects supervisor Pablo Helman of ILM says the design pays tribute to the work that special-effects artist A. Arnold Gillespie did for *The Wizard of Oz*.

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From top: Glinda delights the adoring citizens of Munchkinland; Elphaba and Flyero (Jonathan Bailey) form a secret emotional alliance; Madame Morrible (Michelle Yeoh) plots to maintain the illusions of Oz.

Taking a Ride

In the musical number "Wonderful," which takes place in the Wizard's control room, the Wizard and Glinda try to persuade Elphaba to ally with them. Elphaba temporarily softens her stance and makes her broomstick into an elevated swing for her and Glinda. They float through the space, which transforms into a dark pink, starry vision of Oz and the bright future they could share. Chu wanted the sequence to feel like the Peter Pan's Flight ride at Walt Disney World, so Brooks went to the park and took the ride, filming it for reference.

Chu decided that the sequence should be filmed as an actual ride within the existing Wizard's Throne and Control Room set — rather than on a bluescreen stage — prompting Paul Corbould's special-effects team to spend three weeks constructing the rig on Stage 3 at Sky Studios. The actors' broom swing was mounted on a track that descended from the room's second level all the way down to the floor, with the speed determined by how long the music cue was. Surrounding set walls couldn't be moved, creating a distinctive challenge for both lighting and camera placement. "The question was, 'How can we light this space and make it feel magical?'" Brooks recalls. "We tested mesh on the walls with twinkle lights, but it felt cheap, so we chose instead to use colored light that shifted with live lighting cues as the camera crane followed the path of the ride."

They dimmed down the rest of the room so that only a bit of texture on the walls behind the actors would be visible. The sequence starts in pink when Glinda sings, and when Elphaba takes over, everything goes green. The actors were lit by Smith's Candy Lights. "We were able to hang and angle them to keep them off the background," he says. "The lights were big enough to be a soft key as well as an effect light. We dimmed as they went through the ride, and when they got to the end, we swapped key lights [during the take] and they came out into the normal tungsten light."

There, Elphaba and Glinda are greeted by the Wizard, who sweeps them into a dance sequence in his cavernous throne room, where the walls start shimmering with moving, multi-colored light. "There are rainbows throughout, but here we wanted that array of color to represent all the possibilities available to Elphaba," Brooks says. "She can choose to join the Wizard or she can choose to continue on her path — that beautiful rainbow of possibility."

Crowley's original design for the space, which includes the giant Wizard head operated by puppeteers, left no place to position lights, "so we worked with Nathan to create 1-foot gaps between each ring of the cone-shaped room so we could push light through them, and then we put up Lee Filter 120 diffusion between the gaps," Brooks says. Smith notes the walls were lit from below by 100 Chroma-Q Studio Force II 48 LEDs in a cut-out row at the floor, supplemented by more of the fixtures pointing

"Every department crafted not only a distinct visual and emotional arc for each film, but also a cohesive throughline so that, when viewed together, both films share one visual heartbeat."

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Cinematographer Alice Brooks, ASC checks her monitor.

down from the top of the wall. On the ceiling were 200 Cineo Lighting LB800 units creating the moving colors.

Lighting-console operator Daniel Bocking spent a couple of weeks in the room planning out the lighting cues. The speed of the light movement had to be flexible enough to align with Christopher Scott's choreography and the performers' live singing.

Key Tools

Chu and Brooks elected to shoot with an Arri Alexa 65 after extensive testing. Brooks recalls screening test footage with Chu at Company 3: "We didn't have the Alexa 65 for long, so we had very little footage from it, but when we saw it, we looked at each other and said, 'This is *Wicked* — it needs to be large-format.'"

They wanted high resolution to best showcase huge, detailed sets — such as Elphaba's forest hideaway, which spread over two stages — and frames filled to the brim with characters and background performers. A-camera/Steadicam operator Karsten Jacobsen estimates that one third of the two films was shot with Steadicam. The Alexa 65 "has a good weight for Steadicam," he observes. "With the bearings in the Steadicam, when you start panning with a heavy camera, it has its own momentum. You just tell it to go there, and it will go. I wouldn't like to run full speed with an Alexa 65, but for [most] Steadicam shooting, I love it."

Brooks' go-to lenses were a custom set of prototype Panavision Ultra Panatar II primes created by Panavision's senior vice president of optical engineering and lens strategy, ASC associate member Dan Sasaki. The lenses provided vintage anamorphic qualities, including a natural falloff and warm flares.

For the catalytic character of Dorothy, Brooks employed a Petzval lens, utilizing its distortion to underscore the girl's foreignness. She was also careful to frame Dorothy and her fellow "witch hunters" — the Tin Man (Ethan Slater), the Scarecrow (Jonathan Bailey) and the Cowardly Lion (voiced by Colman Domingo) — so that "they're always seen either from a distance or in details. We might see Dorothy's shoes up close, or we might see the characters from behind. In the scene that shows the Wicked Witch melting, we see it as shadow play on the wall, from Glinda's point of view."

Brooks used the smaller Red V-Raptor XL 8K VV camera for drone shots — including an approach to Munchkinland over a rainbow-patterned field of 9 million tulips that were planted for the film — and for the scene in which Elphaba is being chased into the forest by the Wizard's flying monkeys (digitally created by ILM).

CG Enhancements

Crowley designed and constructed massive interior sets reaching 45' high that filled entire soundstages, along with exterior builds towering up to 55' and spanning the equivalent of four American football fields. The goal was to capture the grandeur of classic Hollywood filmmaking, with as much of the film as possible shot practically in camera. When CG backgrounds were required — such as for Elphaba's broom-flying sequences or sweeping vistas over Emerald City — Brooks collaborated closely with Helman to ensure a seamless blend between the practical and the digital.

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From top: Elphaba meets some old friends along the Yellow Brick Road; Chu prepares Erivo for takeoff; the Wicked Witch in flight with her broom.

On a weekly basis, Chu and Brooks distributed references indicating color, tonality and contrast for what they were about to shoot. These references were drawn from other movies, concept art, camera tests or paintings. VFX would lay these in with their backgrounds to ensure lighting matched.

VFX also mapped out all the lenses to ensure consistency with the composited elements. “The 40mm was one of my favorites because it had an interesting flare, and the edges were soft in a unique way,” Brooks says. “We had two 65mm lenses — one was Elphaba’s hero lens, and it had a 10-inch close focus, which was very useful in the second film for the numerous quiet shots of Elphaba in extreme close-up. Glinda’s primary lens was a 75mm. In the finale, as Glinda steps into her true power, we filmed her with Elphaba’s 65mm lens — a visual acknowledgment that Glinda has finally become truly good. Each lens had its own distinct character that we used to tell the emotional story.”

For CG creatures such as the Cowardly Lion, Doctor Dillamond, Chistery and Dulcibear, the filmmakers would shoot plates on set with performers in gray suits acting out the parts, and VFX would then animate the CG characters, incorporating the qualities of the specific lens. Brooks sought Helman’s guidance for shots with smaller CG animals that were complete digital creations; an example of this is Elphaba’s number “No

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Above: Cameras on remote heads angle in on a day scene in Munchkinland. Below: In a frame from the film, Glinda dons her tiara.

Place Like Home," a song set in the forest in which Elphaba looks for reasons to continue fighting for Oz's animals. The forest animals were created by Framestore. "I struggled with that scene because it was hard to feel the emotion until you had the animals in place," recalls Brooks. "We didn't have people playing the birds, chipmunks and bats. So, Pablo would say things like, 'Okay, there will be a little guy who comes out here.' He could see the CG characters in his head and he described them to me so I could feel it."

Thematic Motivation

There was thematic intent behind the overall approach to camera movement. Brooks describes Glinda's shots as theatrical, refined and precise — she is often center-punched and seen within bubbles, circles, and mirrors, with cameras operating on cranes and remote heads. By contrast, frames featuring Elphaba are more kinetic, raw and naturalistic,

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Main image shows camera with optional accessories and lens.

Above: Glinda walks down the aisle of Emerald City's Palace Hall on her wedding day. Below: A wider view of the set.

frequently employing handheld rigs and Steadicam.

One notable Glinda number, "The Girl in the Bubble," showcases a fluid, mobile camera as Glinda sings about transcending her role as cheerleader and doing actual good. Helman stitched together seven shots that follow Glinda in and out of mirrors throughout her two-story Emerald City suite — captured on Steadicam, dolly and a Scorpio 45 crane — into what appears to be one continuous motion. The recurring reflections reinforce the sequence's central themes of self-perception and illusion.

The scene begins with Glinda entering her suite and seeing herself in a mirror. She walks toward it as the camera moves behind her and pushes into her reflection. The camera then wraps around her and pushes past her shoulder to a ceiling mirror. She climbs a grand staircase to her closet with a wall mirror at the end of it. She walks down the opposite staircase, sits, goes out to her balcony, sees her reflection as a little girl in

The Wizard welcomes Elphaba and Glinda to his grand palace in Emerald City.

her big bubble, then returns inside.

The scene kept both Brooks and Jacobsen up at night. “It was early in our 155-day schedule, and it was the second musical number we shot for both films,” Brooks explains. “This moment is when Glinda’s moral bubble pops — when she can finally look in the mirror at the person she has become and realize that’s not who she wants to be any longer. The pressure was on to capture this pivotal moment for Glinda.”

One morning at 2 a.m., inspiration struck. Brooks grabbed her iPhone, a bowl of fruit, her daughter’s bath toys and her husband’s shaving mirror to rough out the sequence on her kitchen island. From that video, a storyboard was created and handed off to VFX, which produced a more formal techvis. The transitions between the seven shots occur as the camera moves through each mirror, with an additional stitch from crane to Steadicam to accommodate the two-level set — on Glinda’s back — when she reaches the top of the stairs and moves down the hallway toward her closet.

“For the first shot, where Glinda enters and walks toward a mirror, we built the set so that it could open up in the middle of a take [with a hinged wall behind the mirror],” Jacobsen explains. “On Steadicam, I shot into her reflection in the mirror, then we opened the set [as the camera moved around Glinda and could no longer see the wall that moved] so I could then shoot from where the mirror was positioned and be the same distance from her. This gave us the plate for her in the mirror. Then, [on cue], we closed up the set again so we could come around with the camera and it would flow seamlessly. When she looks at the mirror in the ceiling, we had to cut the set open so we could get higher with the crane to get the same perspective of that mirror and shoot down.” He credits key grip Guy Micheletti and 1st AC Lewis Hume for helping to pull off the elaborate scene.

Helman adds, “The three-minute sequence involved two collaborating VFX facilities — ILM and Framestore — working on complex morphs, stitching takes and paint work. It was one of the first scenes filmed in 2022 and took three years to deliver.”

Film-y Look

The overarching visual goal was a “film-y” look, which was achieved by shooting with very shallow depth of field, sometimes using a Glimmerglass ¼ diffusion filter on the lens, doing a filmout and rescanning of full-CG shots, and applying 3 percent LiveGrain in post.

“We had ILM build a film-emulation cube from the filmout of the first movie,” says Brooks. “We incorporated that into certain shots in *Wicked: For Good* — mainly ones with CG animals, to help set them into the picture. We had control over weave, warp and blur.”

In addition to standard theatrical presentations, *Wicked: For Good* will be exhibited in digital Imax, 3D and Dolby Vision. Brooks is grateful for them all. “I’m just thrilled people are going back to theaters, and any

Tech Specs: Aspect Ratio | 2.39:1
Cameras | Arri Alexa 65; Red V-Raptor 8K VV (for drone work)
Lenses | Panavision custom anamorphic, Ultra Panatar II, Petzval

A look "behind the curtain" in the Wizard's control room.

experience that gets them there is exciting. Our Dolby Vision version is my favorite; I love its dynamic range and the way it pushes light through in a different way than our DCI-P3 version, which I also love because it feels so cinematic. Each has its own special qualities."

Brooks and Chu participated in the final grade with Company 3 senior colorist and ASC associate member Jill Bogdanowicz. The team resumed the rhythm they had established on the first movie, but this time, they waited until a significant amount of VFX were incorporated before proceeding. "Whenever Elphaba removed her hat, there would be a line on her forehead where the green makeup wore off," Brooks notes. For Glinda, wig lines had to be retouched, and body mics that were placed on her chest to capture vocals needed erasing, meaning every shot required some small finessing through VFX."

The final color process began with Brooks and Bogdanowicz watching the film together. Brooks gave her initial notes, after which Bogdanowicz completed a first pass. They then spent about a week refining the look together before Chu joined to provide his input. A DCP version was screened for the primary cast, friends and family in a full theater. The filmmakers used insights from that audience experience — seeing the film with a full house, on a massive screen — to guide their final pass.

Now that the *Wicked* saga has wrapped, Brooks can finally reflect on the long, wild ride. "It's been five years since I first spoke to producer Marc Platt about these movies," she says. "When I signed on, I had no idea what a huge part of my life it would become — or how emotional and rewarding the journey would be. Who knew it would go on to touch so many people around the world in such a profound way?"

To see a selection of lighting plots from Wicked: For Good*, visit theasc.com/articles/wicked-for-good-lighting-diagrams.*

Our Clubhouse Conversations *video interview with Alice Brooks, ASC is coming soon — check here:*

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Star-Crossed Love: *Song Sung Blue*

Amy Vincent, ASC and director Craig Brewer follow a unique pair of tribute musicians through triumphs and tragedies.

By Carolyn Giardina

Inspired by Greg Kohs' documentary of the same name, *Song Sung Blue* is the latest collaboration between director Craig Brewer and cinematographer Amy Vincent, ASC, who previously teamed on *Footloose* (2011), *Black Snake Moan* and *Hustle & Flow* (*AC* May '05). The film tells the story of Mike and Claire Sardina (played by Hugh Jackman and Kate Hudson), who fall in love in Milwaukee in the 1990s while pursuing their passion for performing the songs of various musical artists they idolize; ultimately, they find their biggest success by creating a Neil Diamond tribute act known as Lightning & Thunder.

The idea for the project was born when Brewer saw Kohs' documentary at the Indie Memphis Film Festival. He recalls, "It had the elements I'm always supremely attracted to, which is working-class stories [about] people who are dreaming perhaps above their means, perhaps beyond what is possible, [whose] journey and struggle to go after these dreams

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ultimately elevates them and makes them closer to each other. Above all, I'd like to see an audience root for people again … to see themselves in these characters [and] to have that feeling when they leave the movie that anything is possible."

Vincent found the film's characters and themes instantly recognizable. "There's an honesty and a vulnerability to both Mike and Claire," she says. "I think that family and collaboration and creativity exist in everything we do. There's a line Mike says: 'I'm just here trying to be better.' I absolutely love Craig's writing, and I love what his writing brings out in me as a collaborator; it's very easy to find the inspiration to start to create a visual language."

Vincent describes her bond with Brewer as a "brother/sister" dynamic. "There's a loyalty that is paramount," Brewer adds.

Grounding the Glamour

Many of the project's creative decisions were rooted in the realities of 1990s Milwaukee, but Mike and Claire's performances offered room for glamour. "The true-to-life love story between them was the ground-level inspiration, but we go back and forth between music performance and drama," says Vincent. "The dramatic scenes are where we build the realism in, and then I was able to really expand on the glamour and the movie-star aspects of Hugh and Kate in the musical performances."

The cinematographer took inspiration from various photographers and painters: A dusty-blue falloff in the blacks was inspired by the Kodachrome work of Fred Herzog, Vivian Meier and Gary Winogrand, and she also took saturated color cues from the photography of Willam Eggleston. "The red vinyl chairs and deep-yellow drapes in the AA-meeting scenes are a definite nod to the great Mr. Eggleston, who still resides in Craig's hometown of Memphis," Vincent says. "Eggleston has been a source of inspiration for me since he shot stills on the set of *Eve's Bayou*."

Brewer and Vincent's three prior features were shot on film, but for *Song Sung Blue* they went the digital route, choosing Sony's Venice 2 as their production camera. A key reason was Brewer's desire to shoot the musical performances — which range from intimate duets to large-venue shows — in long takes. "Craig often rolled continuously for two or three songs," notes Vincent.

Knowing she would be shooting entirely on location (various towns in New Jersey stood in for Milwaukee), Vincent also leaned toward the Venice 2 for its dual-ISO capability. "The dual-ISO features were useful

Opposite: Mike Sardina (Hugh Jackman) and Claire Stengl (Kate Hudson) perform as the Neil Diamond tribute act Lightning and Thunder. This page, top: Mike and Claire form an intimate bond through their mutual love of music. Above: Director of photography Amy Vincent, ASC on set.

Above: The duo share a moment offstage before a key performance that launches their popularity. Below: Mike's confidence and career direction is bolstered by his relationship with Claire.

for location work, especially in smaller nightclubs and bars and [for the] night-interior work at the family home," the cinematographer says.

Additional cameras employed on the production were a Sony DVW-700WS (used for broadcast-camera footage and recorded onto an Odyssey external recorder) and a Sony HandyCam (DCR-TRV120 with Hi8 tape).

Vincent shot with Leitz Hugo primes (ranging from 18mm to 135mm) and Fujinon Premista 19-45mm, 28-100mm and 80-250mm zoom lenses. "I have long been a Leica-glass user both for cinema and still photography," she notes. "I'm especially fond of Leica M .08 lenses, and I often shoot with Leitz Summilux-C lenses. The Hugos have a beautiful falloff on the edges, all contained in a compact, lightweight build. I love the way the focus falls away in foreground elements in close focus."

In making these choices, Vincent began with extensive testing, collaborating with production designer Clay Griffith, set decorator Lisa Sessions Morgan, costume designer Ernesto Martinez, and Jackman and Hudson's hair-and-makeup teams. She then worked with Company 3 colorist and ASC associate member Tom Poole to create a show LUT.

“We used the one LUT for the entire movie, with minimal on-set color correction,” she says. “I was raised photochemically, so the singular LUT discipline really works for me.”

“When we shot the tests, we had Hugh and Kate in full makeup; we had the wood paneling from the interior of the Sardinas’ home, and we had super-warm practicals,” Vincent explains. She wanted to glamorize the lead actors to an extent, but “I wanted it all to be integrated. I didn’t want it to look like we pulled a special soft light for Kate.

“We played a low level of atmosphere in most sets, and we stayed light on diffusion, using Tiffen Black Satin — either ⅛ or ¼ — in front of the beautiful Leitz glass.

Above and below: While recovering from an accident, Claire dreams of a return to musical glory, in a zone that exists “between reality, memory and depression,” says Vincent. “It’s Claire’s glamorous dream idea of what she looks like onstage.”

“Tom Poole’s exquisite work on the shooting LUT, and subsequently in final color, allowed us to keep a slate-blue in the blacks, slightly warm skin tones and saturated color.”

Filming the Performances

Principal photography took place over a brisk 37 days. The filmmakers approached the larger musical numbers as if they were filming a live

Above: Vincent's low-key approach enhances the melancholic ambience as Claire spends a lonely holiday evening during a strained stretch in her relationship with Mike. Below: During the tough times, Mike shares a meal with his daughter, Angelina (King Princess), at a Thai restaurant where he's landed a regular gig.

concert, typically with three cameras and often incorporating a crane and dolly. These setups comprised Lightning & Thunder's appearance as a warmup act for Pearl Jam, and their final performance in the film; both were shot at the 3,000-seat Ritz Theatre in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

"Vocal tracks were pre-recorded by Kate and Hugh for the larger-venue performances," Vincent notes. "For more intimate songs, like 'Cherry Cherry' and 'Play Me,' the vocal tracks were recorded live.

"The arrangements for the Neil Diamond songs were done by composer Scott Bomar, who worked with Marc Franklin."

The final concert spotlights three songs that were filmed as a continuous performance. All of the supporting castmembers were in the audience, along with roughly 150 background actors. The goal, says Vincent, was "keeping the narrative and all of the character context front

and center.

"We wanted to shoot with full-frame zooms on the three cameras during live performances," she continues. "The Premistas are a great family of full-frame zooms, and we were easily able to match them with the Hugos."

In lighting the performances, Vincent collaborated with gaffer Daniel McCabe and, for the final concert, theatrical-lighting designer Christina See. "The arch of lights over the stage was very important — the symmetry was an important design element, and the distilled color palette of the amber and the blue together was important," Vincent says. "Perhaps that was a subconscious rebellion against the infinite number of 'fake' colors available in today's LED fixtures. I like to keep most colors separated and contained within the warm to cool of the Kelvin scale. To me, there is no color combination more beautiful than the deep amber-to-royal blue that you see on the horizon just after sunset.

"We really embraced this idea of having footlights, sidelights and top lighting that would define the proscenium," she adds. "It took me back to my old theater days. I love it when you can actually see the light that's lighting the set in the frame during the wide shots. That's what led to our decision to shoot 1.85:1 as opposed to widescreen."

To be period correct, says McCabe, "we figured we should go [primarily] with old-school rock 'n' roll PAR cans. We basically just looked at what it would be like to rig a show like that during that era."

For the final performance, he explains, "three spotlights were placed in the mezzanine, and we'd use one at a time depending on the camera angle. We had MR16 strip lights for footlights along the thrust that comes out into the audience. The array onstage was almost entirely tungsten PAR cans. There were a few ETC Source Four Lekos up there as well."

See adds that moving lights were also incorporated, "but sparingly, not like you would see in a concert today. We use the moving lights not just as aesthetics for the wide shots, but also to [create] key light and backlight, as needed, while the cameras moved around. The movers were often moving in shot, but more to accommodate coverage."

"Punctuation of Love"

A key performance depicted in the film is the duo's rendition of Diamond's "Holly Holy," which was shot at a Thai restaurant in Montclair. The performance marks Claire's return to singing following a horrific accident. "It has this triumphant punctuation of love at the end," Vincent says. "There's vulnerability, triumph and redemption."

The warm palette of the sequence is accented by dusty-blue/black tones that were incorporated into the set dressing, which also included

"To me, there is no color combination more beautiful than the deep amber-to-royal blue that you see on the horizon just after sunset."

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UNIT STILL BY SARAH SHATZ.

Above: Director Craig Brewer reviews a scene with his two leads. Below: Vincent and Jackman confer between takes.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AMY VINCENT, ASC.

a mirror ball and paper parasols rigged with 3,000K Satco LEDs. Apart from the practicals, McCabe says, lighting was provided mostly by "PAR cans hung from trusses; tungsten sources throughout; and this little ellipsoidal light that Amy loves, the Fiilex G3, which we often used as an edge light. For spaces like that, it was really just about lighting the environment and letting the theatrical lights be fairly simple and lo-fi, like they actually would be in those kinds of environments."

The scene depicting the first time Mike and Claire sing together has a similar intimacy. It takes place in Claire's apartment and begins their rendition of Diamond's "Cherry Cherry," followed by "Play Me." Vincent describes camera operator Dave Thompson's handheld work on the first song: "It starts out fun and playful, and then it gets really strong, sweet and intense as it progresses. We were swinging the camera around, and all the lighting was off the floor so we could see 360 degrees. It was pretty rough and free.

"Then, for 'Play Me,' we laid dance floor and had the camera on a tiny PeeWee dolly with a mini Libra remote head," she continues. "[Dolly grip] Andy Sweeney had the freedom to just flow with the music and move the camera." At that point, Sweeney was the only person in the room with Jackman and Hudson. "You can't give too many people too many directions or you'll miss the magic," notes Vincent. "Our approach was giving Andy the opportunity to hear the music and do what he does best."

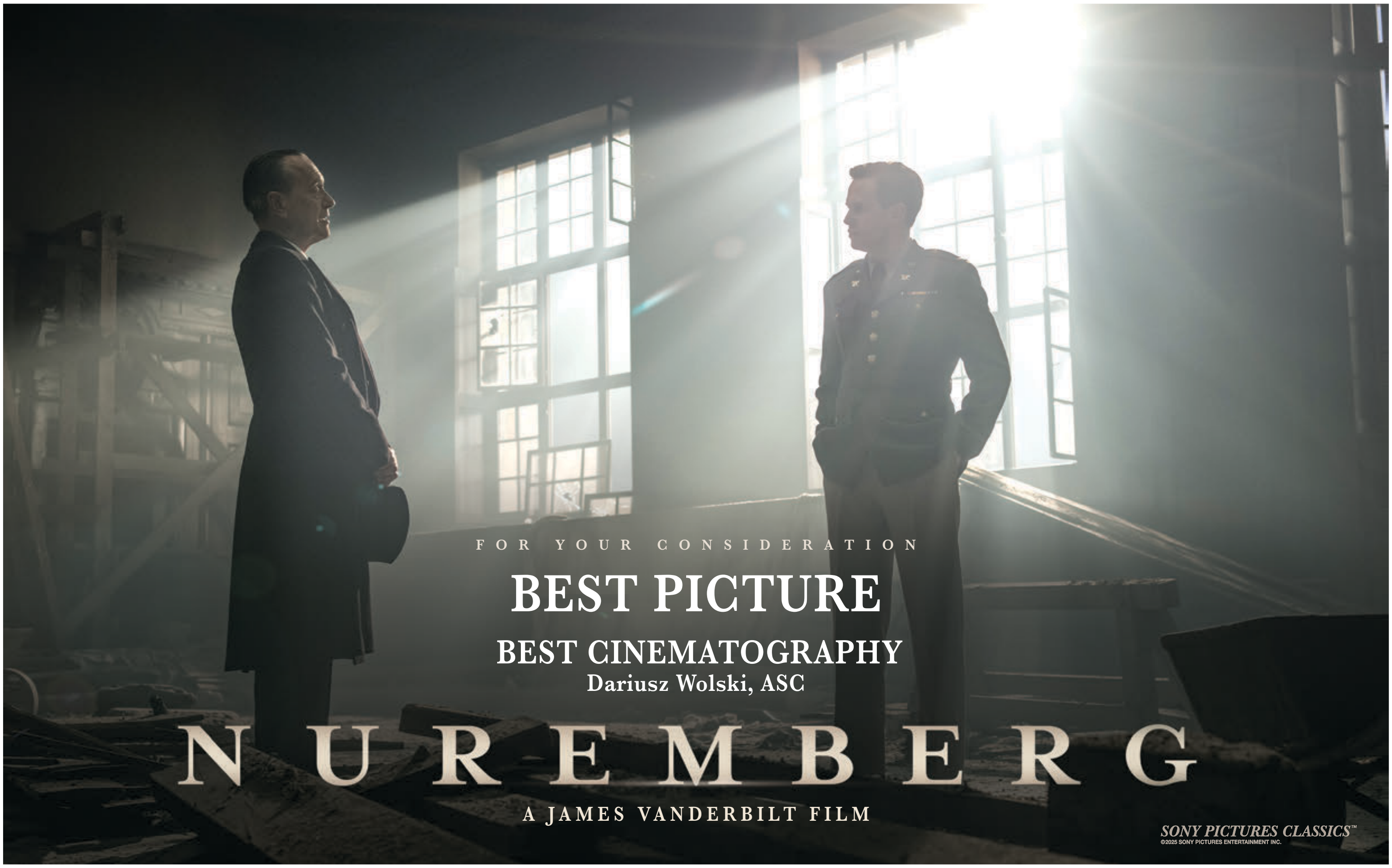
Claire's Dream

In contrast to the bigger performance numbers, the lighting in the dramatic sequences was about realism — for example, in scenes set at the Sardinas' home, a location in the Northern New Jersey borough of Old Tappan.

Scenes that take place immediately after Claire's accident feature a muted, cool palette. "Then, once she finds the courage to go out and perform again, the color palette shifts dramatically, with much richer reds and purples and blues," McCabe notes. "It's very vibrant, and the sources are much harder. There's that sense of theatricality and a kind of rebirth."

The drama breaks from reality in a dream sequence during which Claire, recovering from her accident, wakes and sees her bathroom door ajar, with heavy steam swirling in the light. She drags herself across the floor toward this sight (a nod to Andrew Wyeth's famous painting *Christina's World*), and "reaches into the steam with her hand," Vincent details. "There's a lot of overexposure built in. We're definitely out of our realism at that point, and then the scene transitions into Claire parting some shimmery curtains as she steps out onto a stage. As she parts the curtains, there's a certain dreaminess — the lens is actually right on the plumb line to the shimmer curtain, so the strands of Mylar are in different focal planes, moving as she goes in profile out to the stage. And then we see her point of view of the red practical lights out in the audience. All the background actors are dressed in black formalwear, so you can hardly see them. She steps out and the spotlights come up, and we're completely engrossed and embedded in her rendition of 'Sweet Dreams.'

"We cut behind her, and there's a lot of overexposure and spotlight," Vincent continues. Claire hears Mike's voice interrupting her, and "he comes up onstage. She tries to get away from him, and then she falls.



Lightning and Thunder pull out all the stops for their performance at a triumphant comeback show.

And on the cut, she falls in the front yard of their house. I carried the spotlight look over from the stage, so there's a spotlight on her in the yard that fades out as a car's headlights go by, and then we're in a normal night exterior, with the couple's kids out there and Mike holding Claire."

Vincent perceives the scene as a zone that exists "between reality, memory and depression. She's been trapped in her bed for a while. The *Christina's World* homage is very evocative."

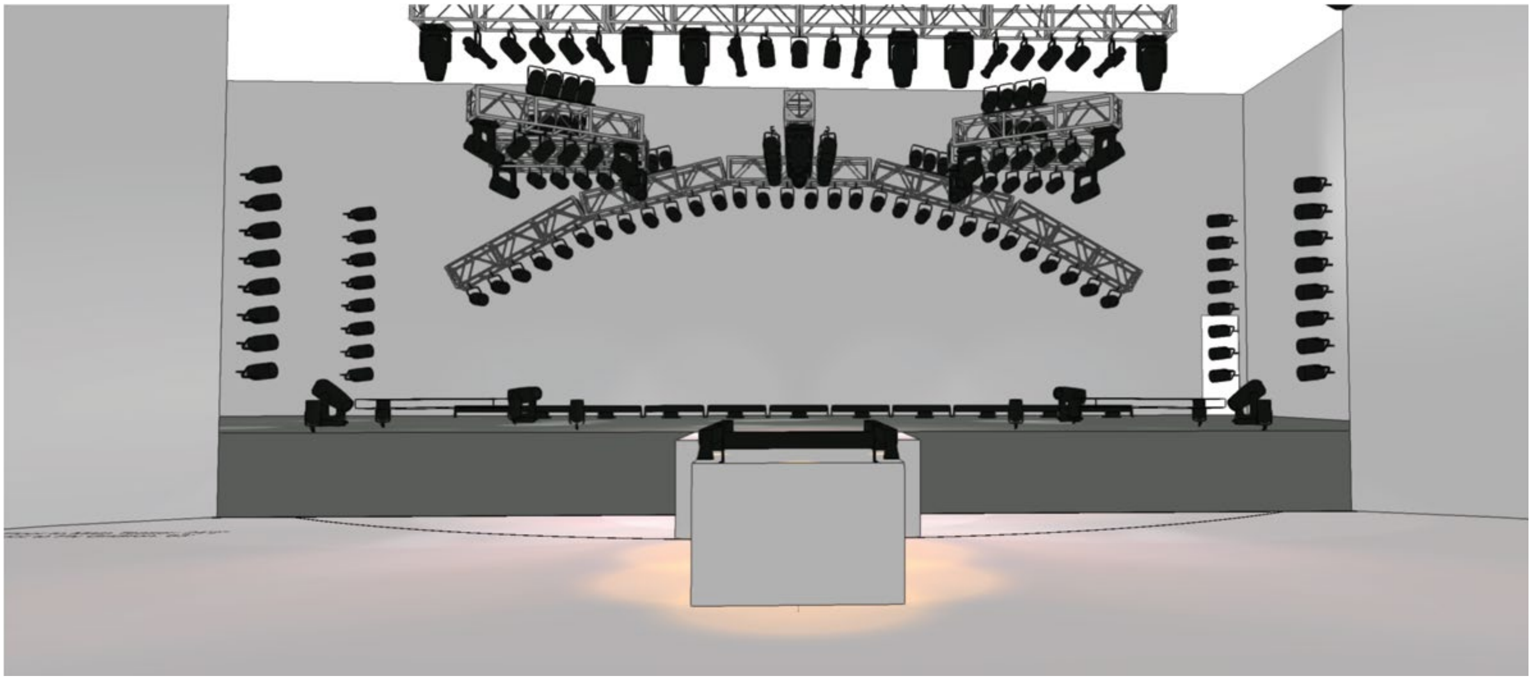
During the testing phase, the filmmakers decided to pair Hudson's pink dress with the navy blue of the shimmer curtain, as well as a touch of red. Vincent also used some overexposure and slightly higher frame rates to lend the sequence a surreal feel. "There's a lot of sparkle in the movie, but there was a subtlety to that dress in combination with the navy blue. Those two colors don't occur together anywhere else in the movie, and the combination was unbelievably flattering to Kate and her skin tones. It's Claire's glamorous dream idea of what she looks like onstage.

"A lot of it is letting that obfuscation that happens when a spotlight hits a lens be the thing that takes us in and out of reality," she concludes. "We are actually photographing the light sources and using lighting to take you in and out of the reality."

Family Vibes

McCabe praises Brewer and Vincent for fostering a "family environment" on set. "A lot of people say that, but they really live it, and that makes it so much more of an enriching experience." He recalls that before production began, Brewer took Vincent and other members of the team to an Imax screening of the Talking Heads concert film *Stop Making Sense*. "The theatricality of that show builds," McCabe observes. "The first number is just David Byrne alone on a plainly lit stage, and then, by the end, it's like a full-on theatrical extravaganza. That was a good way to get introduced to the journey our two hero characters would be taking,

Tech Specs: Aspect Ratio | 1.85:1
Cameras | Sony Venice 2, DVW-700WS, DCR-TRV120
Lenses | Leitz Hugo, Prime (350mm only); Fujifilm/Fujinon Premista



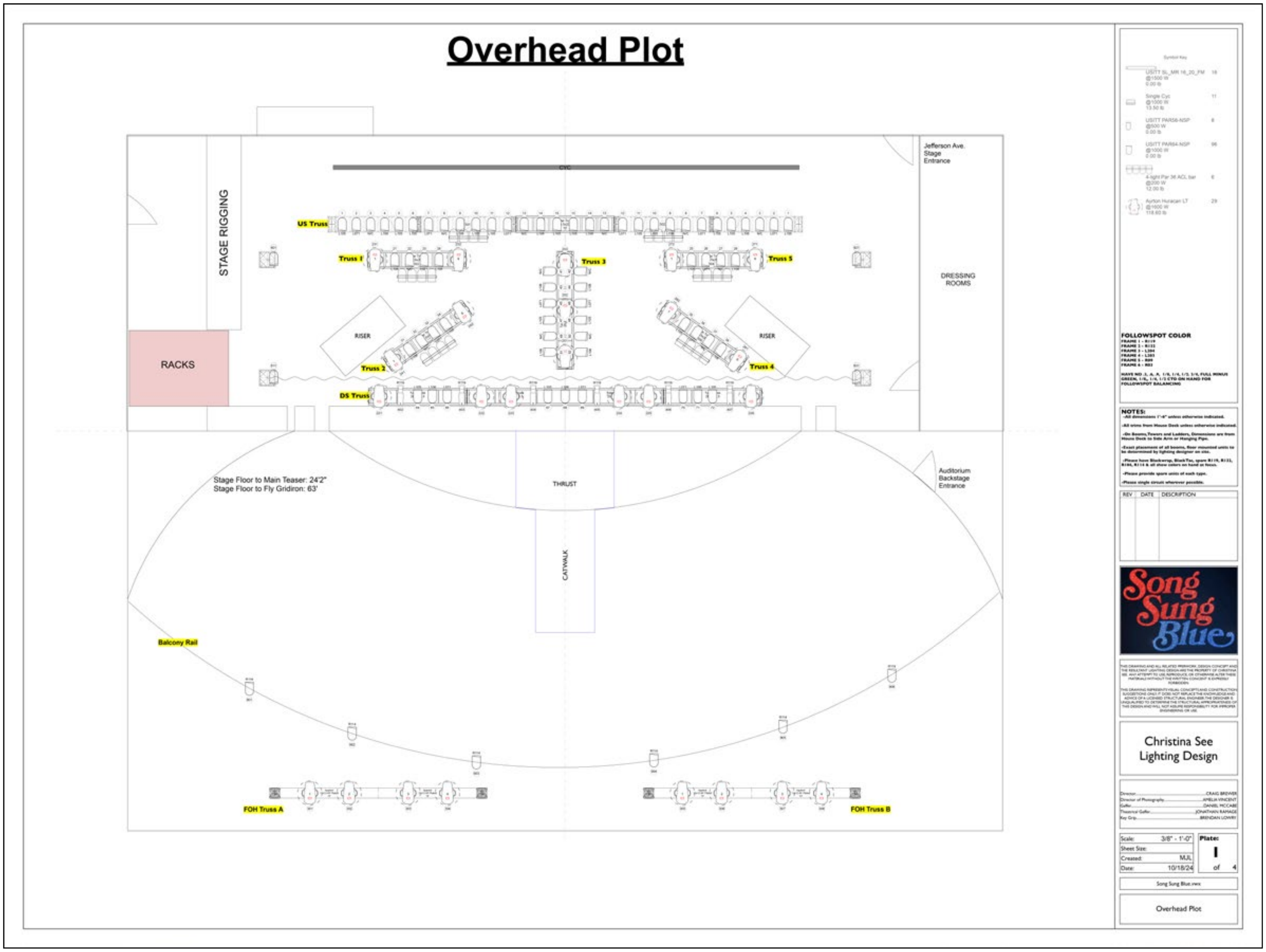
Above: A diagram shows a portion of the lighting setup for the climactic comeback show. The units shown here were supplemented by several other layers of fixtures positioned overhead and in other areas of the stage. Right: Vincent (standing in silhouette at the front of the stage) observes the stage setup.

and a good way to start that family vibe and get to know one another."

Vincent reflects, "There's something about the joy that Craig brings to set and the level of kindness, honesty, love and collaboration he creates. And I have never experienced the level of support through preproduction, production and post that I experienced from Focus Features. They were behind us the whole time. When you feel that support, it makes for really constructive, productive shooting days." ⏀

Our Clubhouse Conversations *video interview with Amy Vincent, ASC is coming soon — check here:*

Click here to see schematics of the additional layers of lighting for the setup featured on this page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RACKS
CYC
US Truss
Truss 1
Truss 2
Truss 3
Truss 4
Truss 5
DS Truss
RISER
RISER
Jefferson Ave. Stage Entrance
DRESSING ROOMS
THRUST
CATWALK
Auditorium Backstage Entrance
Stage Floor to Main Teaser: 24'2"
Stage Floor to Fly Gridiron: 63'
Balcony Rail
FOH Truss A
FOH Truss B
Symbol Key
USITT SL_MR 16_20_FM
Single Cyc
USITT PAR56-NSP
USITT PAR64-NSP
4-light Par 36 ACL bar
Ayrton Huracan LT
FOLLOWSPOT COLOR
NOTES:
REV
DATE
DESCRIPTION
Song Sung Blue
Christina See Lighting Design
Director
CRAIG BREWER
Director of Photography
AMELIA VINCENT
Gaffer
DANIEL MCCABE
Theatrical Gaffer
JONATHAN RAMAGE
Key Grip
BRENDAN LOWRY
Scale:
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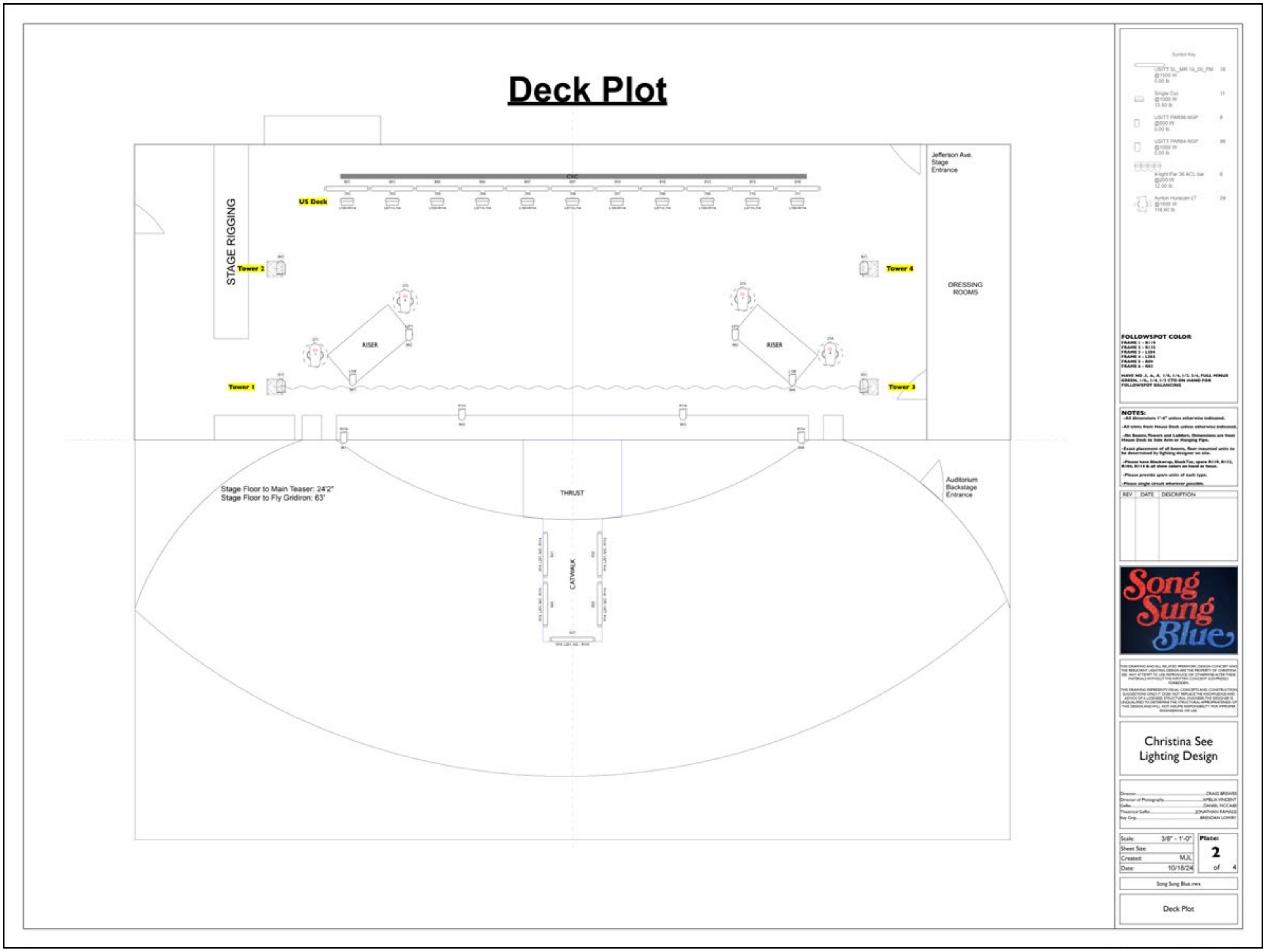
Overhead Plot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DRESSING ROOMS
Auditorium Backstage Entrance
THRUST
CATWALK
Stage Floor to Main Teaser: 24'2"
Stage Floor to Fly Gridiron: 63'
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USITT SL_MR 16_20_FM @1500 W 0.00 lb 16
Single Cyc @1000 W 13.50 lb 11
USITT PAR56-NSP @500 W 0.00 lb 8
USITT PAR64-NSP @1000 W 0.00 lb 96
4-light Par 36 ACL bar @200 W 12.00 lb 6
Ayrton Huracan LT @1600 W 118.60 lb 29
FOLLOWSPOT COLOR
HAVE ND .3, .6, .9, 1/8, 1/4, 1/2, 3/4, FULL MINUS GREEN, 1/8, 1/4, 1/2 CTO ON HAND FOR FOLLOWSPOT BALANCING
NOTES:
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-Please provide spare units of each type.
-Please single circuit wherever possible.
REV
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DESCRIPTION
Song Sung Blue
Christina See Lighting Design
Director CRAIG BREWER
Director of Photography AMELIA VINCENT
Gaffer DANIEL MCCABE
Theatrical Gaffer JONATHAN RAMAGE
Key Grip BRENDAN LOWRY
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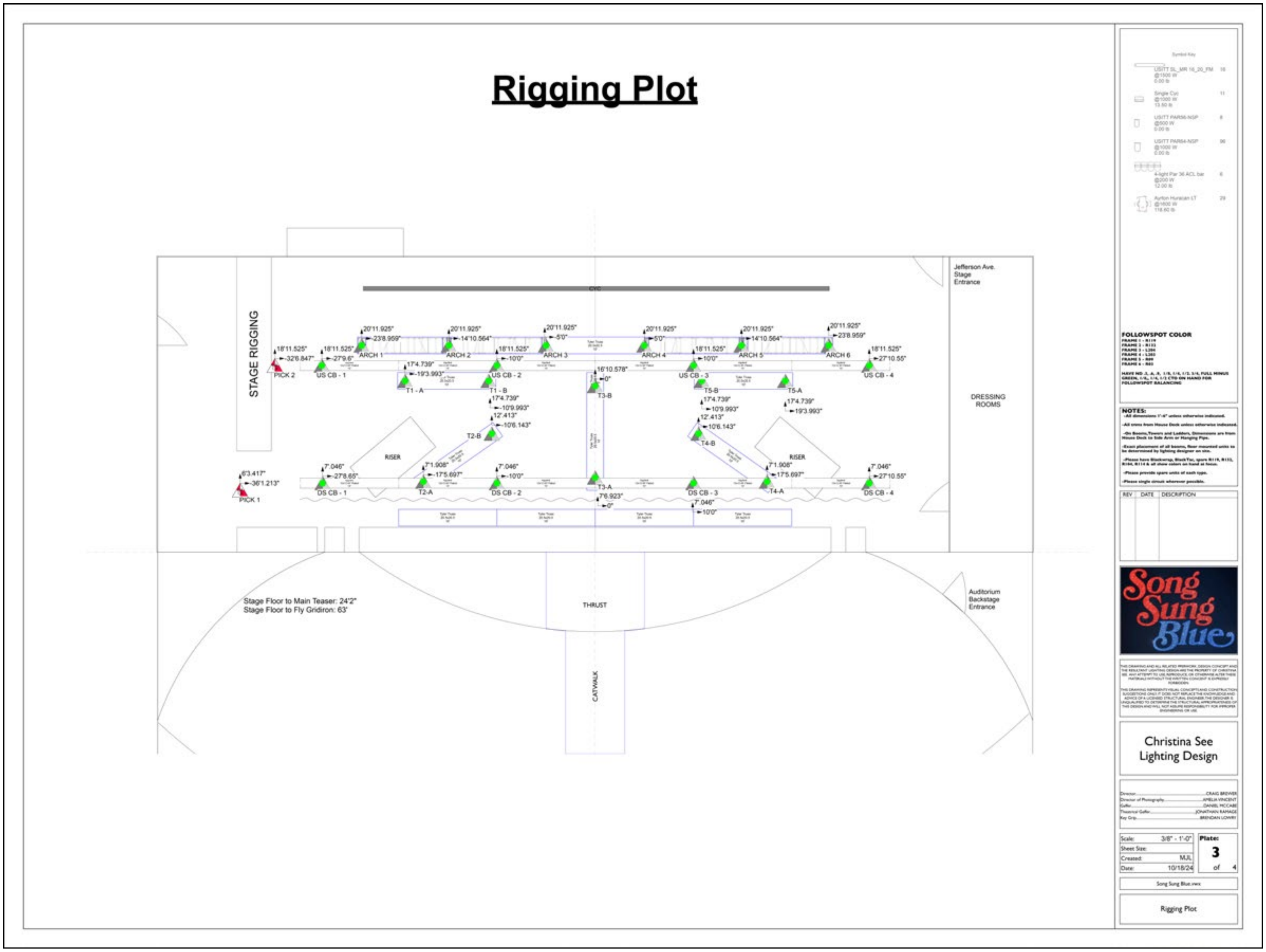
Plate: 2 of 4
Song Sung Blue.vwx
Deck Plot


Rigging Plot
STAGE RIGGING
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DRESSING ROOMS
Auditorium Backstage Entrance
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PICK 1
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DS CB - 3
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DS CB - 4
7'.046"
27'10.55"
Stage Floor to Main Teaser: 24'2"
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Song Sung Blue.vwx
Rigging Plot

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Bugonia: A Power Play

Robbie Ryan, BSC, ISC taps the VistaVision format to convey the machinations of Yorgos Lanthimos' intense feature.

By Bill Desowitz

For their latest collaboration, the absurdist psychological thriller *Bugonia*, director Yorgos Lanthimos and cinematographer Robbie Ryan, BSC, ISC chose to employ the 8-perf 35mm VistaVision format (1.50:1), but the immersive result is a far cry from *One Battle After Another* (*AC* Nov. '25) or *The Brutalist* (2024). The horror and humor of the story — adapted from the 2003 Korean sci-fi film *Save the Green Planet!* — is heightened by static shots of the central characters, conspiracy theorist Teddy (Jesse Plemons) and ruthless pharmaceutical-company CEO Michelle (Emma Stone), whom Teddy and his hapless accomplice, Don (Aidan Delbis), conspire to kidnap, believing her to be an alien bent on Earth's destruction. The visual strategy isolates them as larger-than-life figures caught in a battle with global stakes.

UNIT STILLS BY ATSUSHI NISHIJIMA. ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF FOCUS FEATURES.

Opposite: Hapless kidnappers Teddy (Jesse Plemons) and Don (Aidan Delbis) examine Michelle (Emma Stone), the prominent CEO they've imprisoned in their basement. This page, top: Teddy ruminates in the company cafeteria beneath a portrait of the boss. Above, from left: Michelle leaves her luxurious home; the executive is abducted.

"Our journey with VistaVision began on *Poor Things* [*AC* Jan. '24]," notes Ryan. "I did a lot of research, and we ended up shooting one scene in the format: the reanimation of Bella. We loved it and really would have liked to use it more, but the camera was very noisy and Yorgos needed sync sound. But he was very curious to do more digging for *Bugonia*."

That digging led Ryan to choose the Wilcam W11 VistaVision camera.

Top: Teddy attempts to reason with Michelle after he and Don shave her head. Above: An exasperated Michelle denies that she's an alien.

Busy Bees

The film's title refers to a piece of Greek mythology in which bees spontaneously generate from a slaughtered ox or cow, and *Bugonia* begins with a sequence showing Teddy tending bees outside his house. "We had a real beehive on the location, and I was very keen to do the bees instead of getting a 2nd unit," Ryan recalls. "We all had to suit up, and there was a 30-meter [98'] barrier; we were like spacemen going up to this place with a very heavy camera. To get the bees to land on the flowers and do their thing was a slow process! The experts would be dropping sugar water onto the petals."

It turned out the bees were distracted by the liquid and didn't pollinate the flowers, so Ryan had to find another opportunity to get his nature footage. He lucked out in London at the glass structure that serves as Michelle's company, Auxolith Corp. "We were filming the security gate when she comes in the office, and there were loads of little flowers around," he recalls. "I realized the bees were doing what they should be doing, so we got a quick shot of her and then did a lot of the beautiful bee stuff. By chance, they had their own hive, and the bees were flying all around and loving the flowers outside the security gate."

Designed Worlds

Accommodating VistaVision entailed designing the locations around

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Above: Teddy urges Don to fully commit to the kidnapping scheme.
Below: Teddy and Michelle grow more contentious. Opposite: Teddy gives Don a pep talk.

the format. These included Michelle's modernist office and home, but especially Teddy's ramshackle ranch house, which was built by production designer James Price in the English countryside.

Ryan details the undertaking: "There was a percentage of space given in the design to accommodate the width of the VistaVision camera, which barely fit through a door frame with the 2,000-foot magazines on it. While Michelle's world is hard-lined and hard-edged, Teddy's is more haphazard and messy, dealing with the whole world of the internet and conspiracy theories."

Lanthimos likes to work on composite sets — in this case, a house with everything a real location would offer — so the whole house had to be fully functional and include a basement. "It was a 360-degree building; you could shoot anywhere, and it was a wonderful place to film in because James had done such a great design on it," Ryan says. "To get down to the basement was quite difficult. It probably looks like we filmed those scenes on a set, but it was a real basement."

Ryan is accustomed to Lanthimos' preference for lighting with integrated practicals. On *Bugonia*, this meant lots of fluorescents (especially in the basement) and LEDs. However, both VistaVision cameras had flicker issues related to the shutter angle of 144 degrees. This was compounded by a power issue. Ryan explains, "The camera is running at American power, which is 60 Hertz, whereas in the U.K., we run on 50 Hertz. So, the cameras picked up flicker in the lights, and we had to change the whole power supply to suit the American system of the cameras. But it was a constant battle. The cameras also jammed a lot because of tensions and belts. The transport needs to be very powerful to get twice the amount of film stock through the gate at the same speed. The jamming was a bit of a time-sucker, but it was relatively manageable and we got used to it."

Chess Match

Lanthimos' visual strategy on *Bugonia* was less flamboyant than it had been for his previous films, but the large camera still followed the characters. He departed from his usual single-camera rule for dialogue scenes; this is where the filmmakers incorporated the Arricam Studio ST. "There's a lot of dialogue in the film, so it was more economical schedule-wise to do it with two cameras — and better for the actors as well," says Ryan. "From a camera-language point of view, the film is quite 'composed,' but if there's movement, we're moving."

After Teddy and Don kidnap Michelle, shackle her in their basement and begin interrogating her, the film becomes a tense chess match. "How the hell do you film a basement differently every time?" Ryan asks with a laugh. "I learned my basement rules! We wanted to introduce the basement so you would get to know it better each time. So, we start off where

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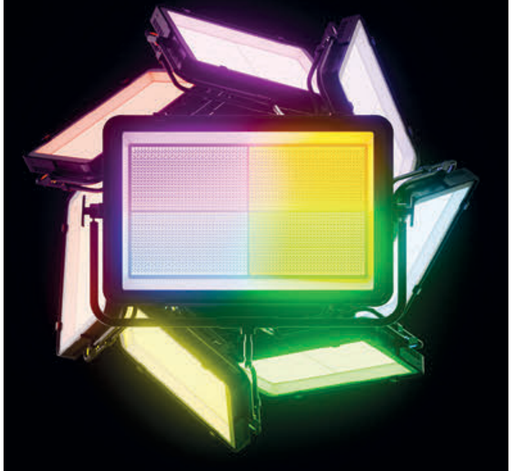

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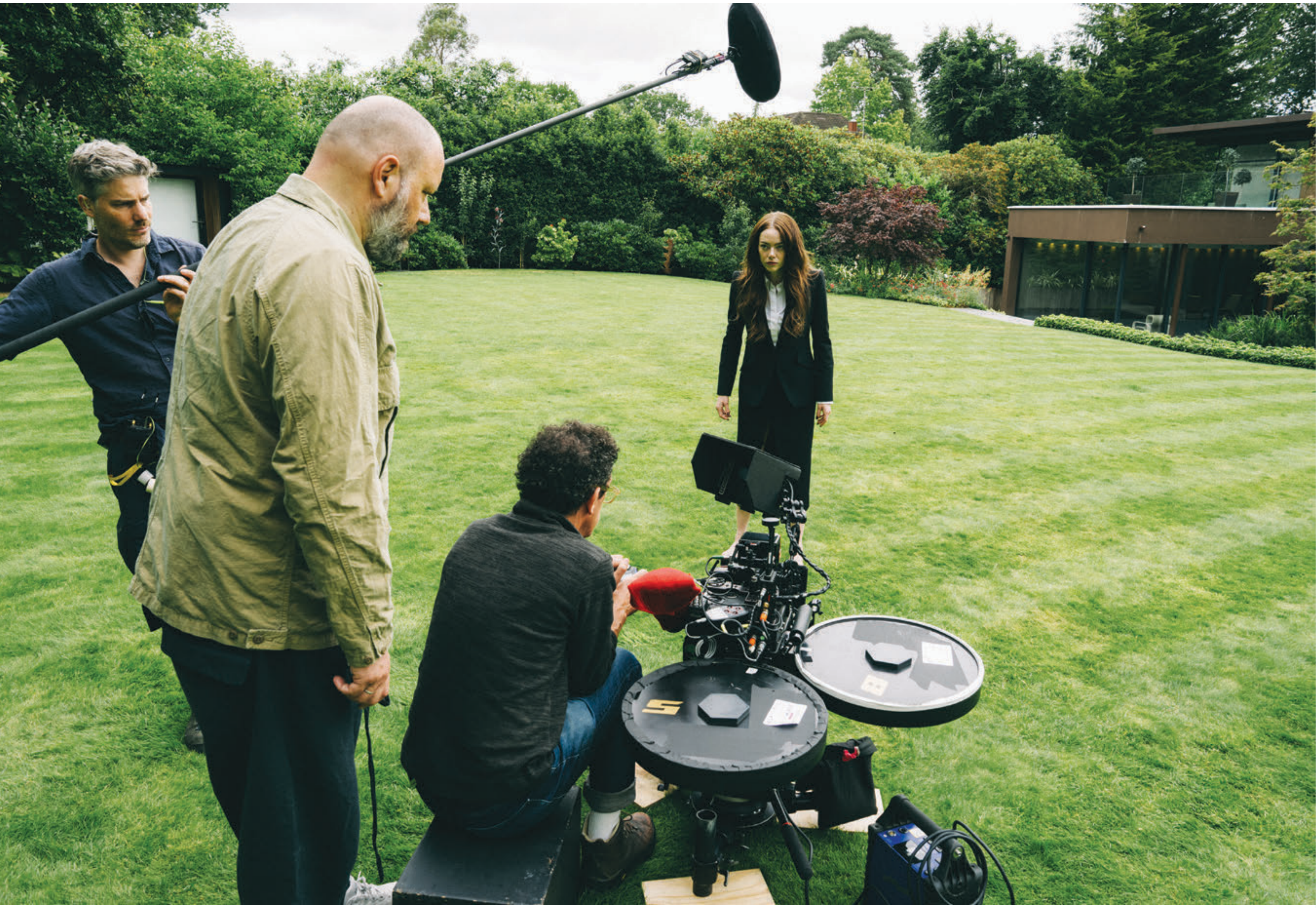


Above: Director Yorgos Lanthimos (second from left) and cinematographer Robbie Ryan, BSC, ISC (seated) line up a shot of Stone. Note the VistaVision format's horizontal film mags. Opposite: Ryan preps a bedroom shot with Stone.

there's a very small amount of light from a mixture of LED work lights and tungsten work lights. There's a lovely scene where Michelle wakes up for the first time and you can hear the fluorescent lights flickering on. She's like, 'Where the hell am I?' And we had this other very warm work light, an old-school tungsten film light that acted as a good in-camera work light, lighting that scene. Then, each time we come back to the room, there's a different lighting aspect to it through reconfiguration and illumination. But, generally, by the time you're halfway through the film, you know most of the room's geography. In the third act, the story becomes a bit crazier. But we try to keep things alive in that room with different lighting setups and different feels."

The cinematographer adds that lighting was routed through the Blackout Lighting Console app on an iPad to facilitate individual fixture control.

Enjoyable Surprises

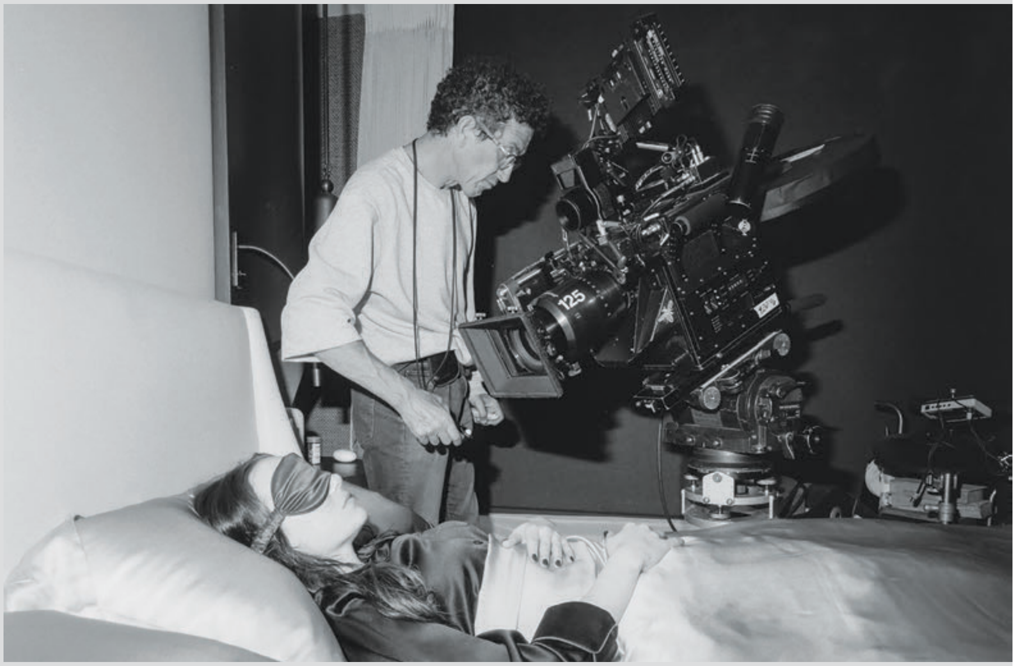
Ryan enjoys the surprises that can emerge from a 360-degree lighting approach. For instance, an actor might walk into a shadow, necessitating a quick adjustment. "How do we constantly keep an exposure and keep them in vision?" he proffers. "That's why I love shooting on film: In the shadows, you always get even more beauty, and you don't have to worry about somebody being a bit underexposed. It always has character."

He adds that on *Bugonia*, he learned to be braver in lighting darker scenes by "letting the ambience do its work. I love a fluorescent. We didn't move them at all, and the actors just fell into the light beautifully. The LED has become so architectural and quintessential, but essentially, [those units are] still doing it like fluorescents. They've just brought it to another level."

As the power dynamic shifts between the two main characters, the lighting favors Michelle in direction. "She just changes as a character," Ryan points out. "When Teddy comes back from the hospital, she's suddenly a lot more confident and strong. It feels as if she's closer to the fluorescents, and she's got a lot more powerful light on her."

Ryan says Lanthimos' ability to create strong visuals always seems

Spotlight on Camera | Adventurous Choices



With the help of Imax camera technician Scott Smith, Robbie Ryan, BSC, ISC tracked down a Wilcam W11 — the quietest VistaVision option specifically designed for modern sync-sound recording — but it was the only one in existence. It served as the A camera on most of *Bugonia*, and a Mini VistaVision camera from Geo Film Group served as the B camera.

The production also carried Arricam Studio and Arriflex 235 film cameras. These cameras were provided by Panavision London and served as backups for select action shots or shots with no dialogue. They also acted as a second camera for certain dialogue scenes whenever the second VistaVision was unavailable.

Ryan tested the Wilcam in Los Angeles in late 2023. “The pro of the Wilcam was that you could stick 2,000-foot rolls on it, which meant you could get 10-minute sequences of shooting,” he explains. “Because it takes about five minutes to reload it, that was a good average.”

Panavision’s Dan Sasaki — senior vice president of optical engineering and lens strategy, and an ASC associate member — also provided the production with the prototype prime spherical lenses developed for *One Battle After Another*. Sasaki notes that these optics were inspired by the characteristics of the vintage Super Speed lenses used by Gordon Willis, ASC, but made to cover the VistaVision film frame.

Ryan notes that the lenses have wonderful flare quality and render very pleasing skin tones. “We used those most of the time,” he says. “The Gordon Willis range went up to 75mm. We used some Primo glass at the longer end of things: 100mm, 129mm and 180mm.”

The production also carried a prototype 18mm, but Ryan explains that “the 21mm was utilized more on *Bugonia*, though sparingly. Yorgos does like wide lenses when needed.”

On the Studio ST and 235 cameras, longer focal length Arri/Zeiss Master Primes were used in dialogue scenes.

Ryan shot three Kodak Vision3 negatives, 50D 5203, 250D 5207 and 500T 5219. He also used some black-and-white Eastman Double-X 5222. “Yorgos loves black-and-white, and to get the best results, we shot black-and-white stock because it is much truer to black-and-white than shooting on color stock,” he notes.

“This film is [predominantly] set in a basement, so I think Yorgos chose this format for the smaller space and the landscape of the face,” the cinematographer says. “Because of the aspect ratio, we’re looking at portraiture, and Yorgos was looking for shallow depth of field. We’d always be shooting at *f*/2, *f*/2.8.”

— Bill Desowitz

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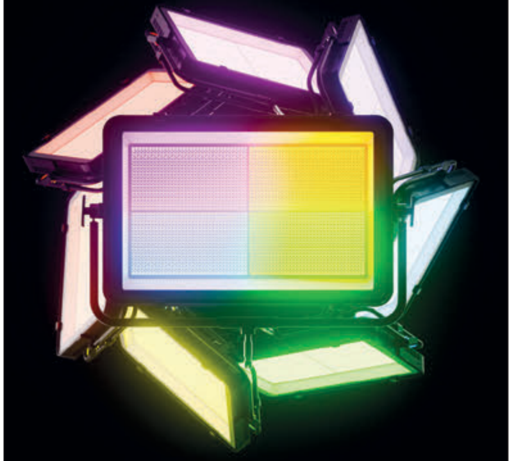

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Above: Cast and crew wear protective suits while preparing to shoot a scene with live bees.
Below: Teddy offers to show a curious police officer (Stavros Halkias) his hive. Opposite: Teddy and Don examine a beehive panel.

Tech Specs: Aspect Ratio | 1.50:1
Cameras | Wilcam W11; Geo Film Group Mini VistaVision; Arricam Studio, Arriflex 235, Arriflex 435 High Speed
Lenses | Panavision Primo, prototype prime; Arri/Zeiss Master Prime

fresh: "I absolutely love that daily game of 'Where is he going to put the camera now?' He always places the camera, and we all follow suit once he's done that. I admire his compositional eye."

A horror element emerges later in the film when Michelle discovers Teddy's gruesome lab experiments. "It's a further revelation that this guy's a little bit unhinged," he says. "As a viewer, you want to know what's going on, but it's enjoyable to see that you don't really know. It's a ticking clock, and Teddy's whole journey is a little demented."

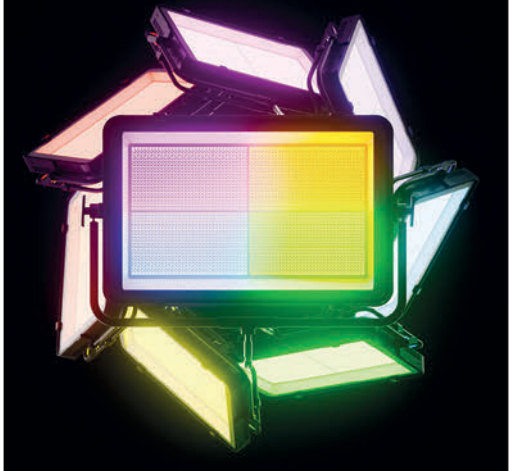
When the story returns to the Auxolith Corp. — scenes they shot near the end of the schedule to accommodate the fact that Michelle's hair has been shorn — the filmmakers mixed up the look with some dolly work. "We'd figure out the moves for which way the characters would be walking and how the camera could cover them," says Ryan. "But, again, there's a lot of talking going on, so we don't have any shots where we follow around them. We wait for them to move, and then we move with them.

"I think that's a very important part of Yorgos' process," he continues. "If there's a track-in, there's a reason. There's a scene where Michelle's in an electric chair and there's a track-in on a stereo that's playing some music. It's not often that you've got a non-called-for move of the camera. There's an economy to Yorgos' style that I've always liked."

For an explosive scene involving Michelle's office closet, the filmmakers used three cameras to accommodate special effects — a Wilcam W11, a Geo Film Group Mini VistaVision and an Arriflex 435 High Speed. "We had the Arri 435 running at 150 fps for the blowing up of the door," Ryan adds. "Yorgos always likes a bit of slow motion that you don't expect — he doesn't [signal that it's] going to happen. You don't fully know when he's going to choose a technique."

Another novel camera move was accomplished with a drone, large enough to carry the Arriflex 235 to film a gruesome moment at Teddy's beehive. "It's great because it's this crazy movement, all of a sudden, out of nowhere," says Ryan. "It's an uncalled-for camera move that seems to really work. Yorgos is very good at using a camera move as a statement."

Our Clubhouse Conversations *video interview with Robbie Ryan, BSC, ISC is coming soon — check here:*



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Tragic Destiny: *Train Dreams*

Adolpho Veloso, ABC, AIP captures hardship, loss and the disappearance of the American West in director Clint Bentley's acclaimed feature.

By Sarah Fensom

Logger and railroad laborer Robert Grainier (Joel Edgerton), the quiet, introspective protagonist of *Train Dreams*, contends with the transformative power the Northern Pacific Railroad has on the Pacific Northwest frontier in the early 20th century. While developing a visual approach, cinematographer Adolpho Veloso, ABC, AIP and director Clint Bentley sought ways to keep the audience connected to the characters.

"With period pieces," says Veloso, "it's easy to fall into the trap of making something that feels distant or disconnected from real life — the way people talk, dress and move through those worlds can feel a bit removed. Our goal was to keep the film grounded and honest, so the audience could really connect with the characters and the story."

"Clint and I naturally lean toward a more organic, naturalistic approach," adds the cinematographer, who also collaborated with Bentley on *Jockey* (2021). "He loves working with spontaneity, and on this film — especially in scenes with kids or animals — he encouraged the actors to improvise, and we'd just follow with the camera."

This strategy sometimes required Veloso to shadow the actors for up to 30 minutes nonstop while the action unfolded in front of the camera, an Arri Alexa 35. These spontaneous-feeling shots are counterbalanced with sequences that were thoroughly mapped out. Veloso explains, "We

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also wanted to include a lot of shots that were thoroughly planned. The mix of those two styles helped us create a language that still feels natural but fluid, like watching someone's memories unfold. I think we remember different moments from our lives in different ways, and we wanted the film to reflect that."

The desire to evoke a sense of memory also led the filmmakers to shoot in the 3:2 aspect ratio. "We thought a lot about how people perceive memories. Old family photos and a lot of archival images often have that format, so it felt like the right frame to tap into that feeling." Veloso notes.

For inspiration, he and Bentley looked at films by Andrei Tarkovsky, as well as archival images that included loggers in the American West, forests and deforestation in the early 20th century, and the development of the railroad. Dorothea Lange's Depression-era photographs were another influence. "I was inspired by the way she framed faces, always isolating characters and showing their despair, but in a beautiful way," says Veloso.

Opposite: Loggers take a break from work on the train tracks that will change their lives and destinies. This page, above: Robert Grainier (Joel Edgerton) creates lasting memories with his wife, Gladys (Felicity Jones), and baby daughter. Below: The couple builds a cabin where they share an idyllic life. The structure was built practically by production designer Alexandra Schaller and her crew.

Three Phases

The filmmakers divided the movie roughly into three sections that dictated how Veloso would use the camera. For scenes with Grainier as a child or teen, the camera is locked off on a dolly or sticks.

In the middle portion of the film, as Grainier lives the bulk of his adult life, Veloso employed a variety of supports. "It's a mix — a lot of handheld, a lot of dolly tracks, even a crane," he says. "We wanted to portray the different moments in his adult life as very dynamic and changing, while also differentiating his family life and work life, or when he's off alone in the woods."

Above, left: Robert shows his daughter the splendors of nature. Above, right: Backlight lends Gladys an angelic aura.

In later scenes, when Grainier is older, Veloso used mostly Steadicam. "The camera still moves, but it does so in a much more fluid, controlled way," he says. "It's mostly Steadicam, with a few lock-offs here and there."

The filmmakers also wanted the visuals to suggest a changing world and landscape as time wears on. In one sequence, Grainier has just returned to a new logging job after a break, and he confronts younger workers and new, more powerful equipment he can't quite figure out. Handheld, Veloso tracks Grainier through the job site and then steps onto a crane, and Veloso and the camera ascend to reveal how much of the forest around Grainier has been cleared. "You really feel the impact and devastation," says Veloso. "As the camera rises and he walks away, you see just how much the landscape has changed around him."

Bentley and Veloso were also keen to evolve some of the visual techniques they used on *Jockey*, such as expressive, slow zooms. In one example in *Train Dreams*, a repeated series of slow zooms humorously characterizes Arn Peeples (William H. Macy), an older logger known for his tall tales and laziness whom Grainier befriends. In the sequence, Peeples is shown multiple times on job sites chattering away, and Veloso gradually zooms out an Angénieux Optimo Ultra 12x (26-320mm T3.1) to reveal a group of men toiling intently around him. "He's so eccentric, and we wondered how to portray that," the cinematographer says. "We loved the idea of slowly revealing everyone else doing the work while he's just sitting there telling them what to do. Repeating that zoom language made it even funnier and more dynamic."

Extensive Exteriors

Veloso used two sets of lenses on the production, which shot on location in the state of Washington. Kowa Cine Prominar primes, spherical Japanese lenses from the late 1950s, served on day interiors and exteriors. I knew we'd have many day exterior scenes with a lot of sun playing out," he says, "and I love how these lenses flare and how they capture nature." Veloso adds that the vintage optics also lent the image a texture that helped conjure a sense of memory.

Because the Prominar lens range was not as fast — T2.3 or slower — he switched to older Arriflex/Zeiss MKII T1.3 Super Speeds for night

Cinematographer Adolpho Veloso, ABC, AIP captures a handheld shot of actor Dave Johnson.

Spotlight on Cinema Cameras | Only Natural

The key camera specifications guiding the filmmakers for *Train Dreams* were a minimal, highly portable setup and a wider dynamic range with great low-light performance. "Because the Alexa 35 has 17 stops of dynamic range, it gave us amazing latitude to just shoot with natural light, real fire and real candles without the addition of any artificial light," Veloso says. "That meant we could keep the set minimal with a smaller footprint, and the actors could inhabit the environment in a way that felt a bit more real."

Among professional digital-cinema cameras, Veloso has a fondness for Arri's models. "It's personal taste, of course, but in terms of the texture and the color, they just always feel right to me."

— *Sarah Fensom*

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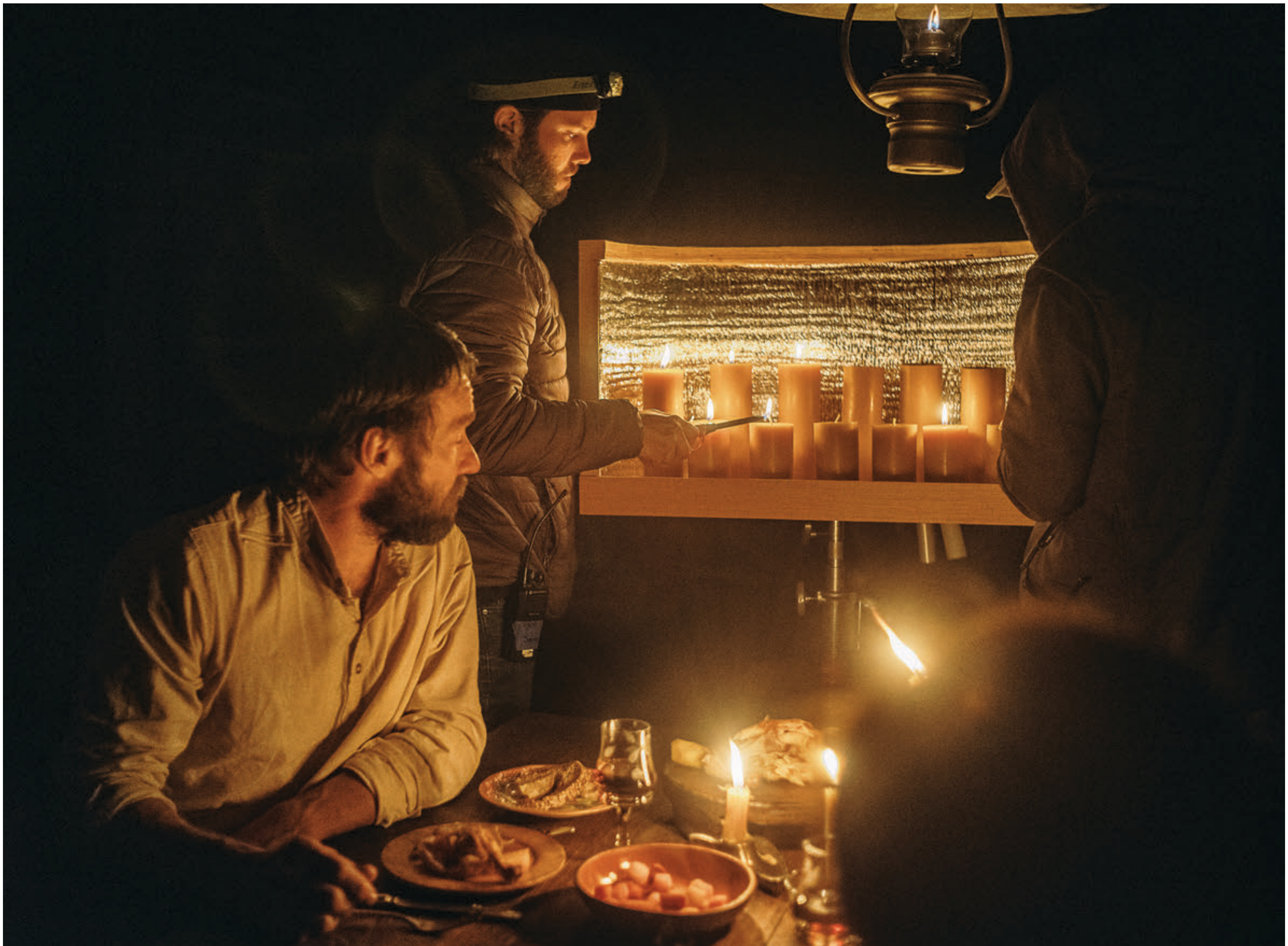
Pictured here: Loggers at work in the forest, backlit by the sun. Below: Crewmembers move a Panther Pegasus crane into position for a forest sequence.

scenes and low-light interiors. “A lot of the night stuff was lit with just a single candle or a gas lamp, and even some of the daytime interiors in [Grainier’s] cabin could get pretty dark, since there were only a few small windows,” he explains. The lenses enabled Veloso to maintain an ISO of 800, even on cabin interiors lit with one double-wick honey wax candle. “They’re beautiful, and also incredibly compact,” he notes. “We really needed a small, flexible setup to move through those tight spaces and stay close to the actors.”

Grainier builds a cabin in a clearing next to a lake, and much of the film’s action takes place in and around the structure. The cabin was a practical build by production designer Alexandra Schaller and her crew, and gave Veloso the ability to move freely in and out of the dwelling during shots. Changing weather influenced many shots, lighting plans and the shooting schedule; the filmmakers were constantly responding to rain or sun, judging whether they wanted to embrace those elements in the moment or change course. “It was really about planning what

Above: Robert and Gladys enjoy dinner by candlelight.
Below: Special-effects foreman James Pendleton does a quick restrike on the production's "1920s SkyPanel."



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Tech Specs: Aspect Ratio | 3:2
Cameras | Arri Alexa 35, Red Komodo
Lenses | Kowa Cine Prominar, Arriflex/Zeiss MKII Super Speed, Angénieux Optimo Ultra 12x

This page: Veloso prepares to capture a handheld shot of the serene couple lounging on a riverbank. Opposite: The cinematographer frames a shot of the cabin during a fire scene.

time of day to shoot everything, being open to changing things last minute, and sometimes saying, ‘Let’s forget that and do something else,’” Veloso recalls.

Naturalistic Illumination

The cinematographer tapped natural light for day scenes as much as possible. “A lot of what we were doing was just shaping light,” Veloso says. “We’d open one window in the cabin and black out the others, or bounce sky light off a window and cut the sunlight — things like that.” For night scenes, practical double-wick candlelight and firelight were the norm. “I worked with the special-effects crew to make sure we had real campfires — actual burning wood — so we could capture the crackles, sparks, and the right flicker and color temperature,” he says. “We also shaped and bounced the light a bit, both outside with the fires and inside with the candles.”

To augment candlelight in Grainier’s pitch-dark cabin at night, gaffer Kevin Cook and key grip Ryan Fritz built a device Veloso called a “1920s SkyPanel,” elaborating that it was basically “a reflective surface that we’d put a lot of candles inside with a diffusion in front of it. It was essentially the size of a SkyPanel with a diffused light, but the real fire inside gave it a softer look with the right temperature and flicker, which made it more gentle on faces.”

Fire plays a significant role in the narrative. However, for two specific sequences, real fire was not an option, and visual effects were employed instead. One was Grainier’s perspective of a giant forest fire (see sidebar, page 80), and the other is the same fire through the dream-like perspective of Grainier’s wife, Gladys (Felicity Jones), as it ravages their cabin while her husband is away. Thinking it would be too complicated to use VFX to get the slow-shutter imagery they were after, the filmmakers shot the sequence on an LED volume at Vossler Studios in Seattle. “To achieve a blurred and slow-shutter ‘dragged’ image, we shot with lower frame rates, like 4, 6 and 12 fps, with a 356-degree shutter,” the cinematographer says. The result actually required very minimal post-production. “The scene was 99-percent ready after we shot it,” he says. “Because the VFX work had been done previously on the images of the fire, we were able to shoot the sequence for real with the shutter speed and frame rate we wanted in camera.”

Logging Action

Train Dreams features many sequences of Grainier and his fellow loggers doing their work, and many of the background actors in these scenes were real loggers. Though some of their work was mimed for the camera — particularly when the production was shooting in protected forests where huge, ancient trees still stand — other sequences were quite real. “For shots of trees falling down, we went to actual logging companies, where the trees were going down anyway, and we were able to catch them on camera,” Veloso says. In some instances, he rigged a Red Komodo with a Kowa Prominar lens to the trees being felled to capture the speed and impact of the action. “We set the camera up on the tree, then everyone cleared the area where the tree was going to fall, and the tree fell perfectly with the camera intact. We had to be really trusting, but the loggers can really pinpoint which direction the trees fall. It’s impressive.”

For a sequence showing Grainier flying in a small biplane and looking over the land he’s been working and living on, Veloso again

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Spotlight on VFX | Wall of "Fire"

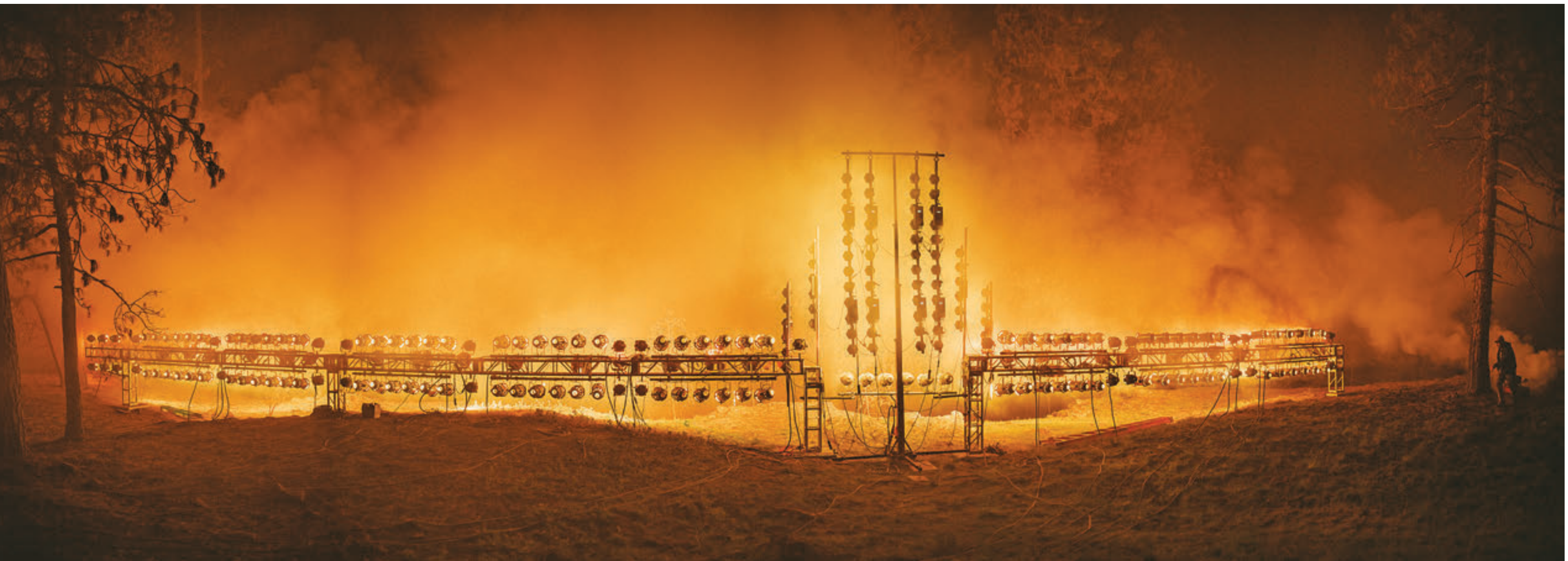
Visual effects in *Train Dreams* were all about subtlety and the accurate re-creation of natural phenomena.

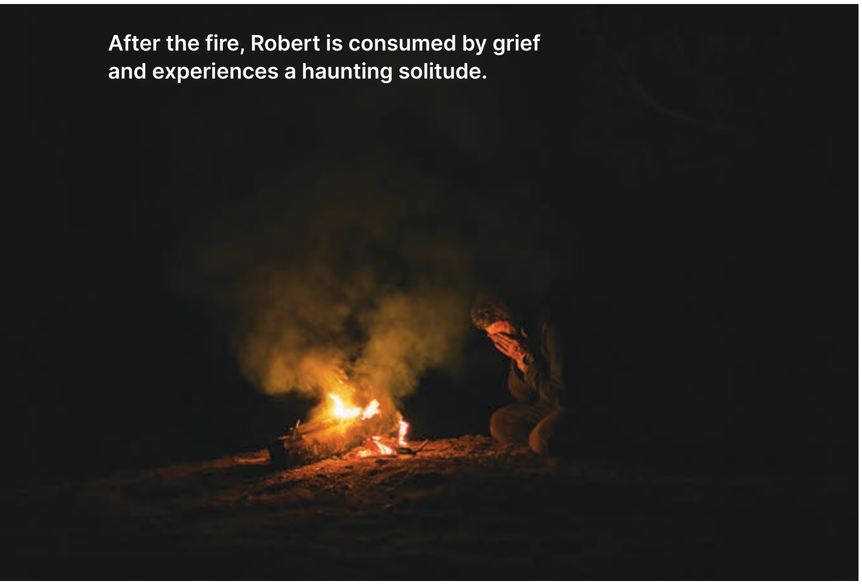
One sequence involves a huge forest fire that Grainier encounters when returning home from a job. "There's basically a wall of fire that he cannot go through," says Veloso. "We wanted to make it as accurate as possible, so we actually went to a burned forest."

Gaffer Kevin Cook created an elaborate lighting setup on and around the burned trees that remained at the damaged site. "Kevin built this huge wall of light using Par64s and a few other heads," says Veloso. "The lights flickered and had different temperatures depending on their heights in order to mimic the way fire changes from bottom to top."

The VFX team, supervised by Ilia Mokhtareizadeh, then changed the wall of light for a wall of fire, mimicking the same flicker and color temperature. The VFX team was also tasked with creating the smoke that emanates from the fire and fills the sky.

— S.F.





After the fire, Robert is consumed by grief and experiences a haunting solitude.

turned to the Komodo. “The actual plane flew rigged with a few Komodos [with Prominars], so all the images of the plane flying are real. Everything we shot with Joel and the pilot was on the ground; the art department and special-effects team built a replica of the cockpit and mounted it on a gimbal that could rotate on nearly every axis. To get spontaneous reactions to the dips and dives of the plane, the crew maneuvered and tilted the cockpit to create the plane’s moves. To capture realistic lighting interactions on the aircraft and the actors’ faces, Veloso says, “The gimbal would rotate, and the sun would naturally hit the actors and the plane just like it would if they were actually flying. That was key – that real interaction with light made a huge difference.” ◆

Our Clubhouse Conversations *video interview with Adolpho Veloso, ABC, AIP is coming soon — check here:*

Clubhouse News

Society Welcomes New Members

Claudia Raschke, ASC

Claudia Raschke, ASC

Raschke decided to pursue a career behind the camera after moving to New York from her native Germany to study modern dance with Martha Graham. It was a conversation with a fellow restaurant worker — who also happened to be a part-time cinematography instructor at Columbia University — that planted the seed. Impressed by the framing and composition in Raschke's still photographs, he invited her to a set and offered her an apprenticeship.

"It was like a lightbulb went off in my head," Raschke recalls. "[I understood] cinematography would nourish all of my artistic needs. I can choreograph using camera movements with my subjects; I can paint with lights and sculpt with shadow to create a three-dimensional world … I didn't want to do anything else after that."

She enrolled in a one-year filmmaking program at New York University and started shooting projects for Columbia film students. She gained a foothold in the industry as a clapper loader and worked her way up the ranks to director of photography, achieving that goal in 1991. After a Gersh agent noticed her work on several films at a Columbia student-film showcase and offered to represent her, Raschke started landing feature work.

Her credits include the documentary features *Cracking the Code: Phil Sharp and the Biotech Revolution*; *Inside the Mind of a Dog*; *Julia*; *Fauci*; and *RBG*; and the TV documentaries *Kevin Costner's The West*; *Change, Not Charity*; *Eleanor & Franklin*; and *Pharma*. She was co-cinematographer/additional cinematographer on the docs *The Universe in a Grain of Sand*, *Obsessed With Light* and *Gabby Giffords Won't Back Down*, among other projects. Her narrative credits include *Frame of Mind*, *Walking on the Sky*, *His & Hers* and *Kiss Me, Guido!*

Alicia Robbins, ASC

Alicia Robbins, ASC

Robbins grew up outside Birmingham, Alabama, and became interested in visual storytelling while studying communications at Vanderbilt University, where she did some shooting for the campus TV station. She continued her studies at the American Film Institute, earning an MFA in cinematography in 2003, and then spent the next several years shooting independent features, documentaries, music videos and commercials — "anything that kept my creative instincts sharp."

Robbins won the ICG Emerging Cinematographer Award in 2018 for her short film *Internet Gangsters*, and her big break came that same year, when she was hired as C-camera operator/additional cinematographer on the Shondaland series *For the People*. That led to an invitation to serve as co-director of photography on Season 16 of *Grey's Anatomy*, and then lead director of photography on Season 17. Robbins' credits also include episodes of *Bridgerton* and *Quantum Leap*, the limited series *Keep Breathing*, and the features *Babysplitters* and *The Wedding Invitation*. She also served as lead cinematographer for Third Law Productions, a company that specializes in 360-degree capture of driving and background footage for visual-effects elements and B-roll; her projects in that arena include *Creed II* and *The Irishman*.

PHOTOS FROM AMC WEEK BY DANYAEL ALCARAZ.

Henner Hofmann, ASC, AMC (third from left) is applauded during his AMC Cinematography Week tribute by Rodrigo Prieto, ASC, AMC (far left); AMC Co-President Diana Garay (second from left); and John Simmons, ASC (far right).

AMC Cinematography Week

Representatives from the ASC and *American Cinematographer* visited Mexico City during the week of October 18-25 to attend a Cinematography Week hosted by the Mexican Society of Cinematographers (AMC) and participate in a variety of events, panels and seminars.

The opening-night festivities included a tribute to **Henner Hofmann, ASC, AMC**, founder and past president of the Mexican Society, who was saluted for his stellar career behind the camera, his contributions to the Mexican film industry, and his years teaching at the Centro de Capacitación Cinematográfica (CCC) film school. Attendees at the ceremony included AMC Presidents Alfredo Altamirano and Diana Garay; **Steven Fierberg, ASC; Michael Goi, ASC, ISC; Rodrigo Prieto, ASC, AMC** (a prominent alumnus of the CCC); **Antonio Riestra, ASC, AČK, AEC, AMC**; **John Simmons, ASC**; and **Checco Varese, ASC**; ASC associate members Mark Bender and David "Goldy" Goldsmith; the ASC's general manager, Delphine Figueras, and chief operations officer, Alex Lopez; and *American Cinematographer* editor-in-chief Stephen Pizzello, circulation director Saul Molina and advertising-sales director Michael Ibañez.

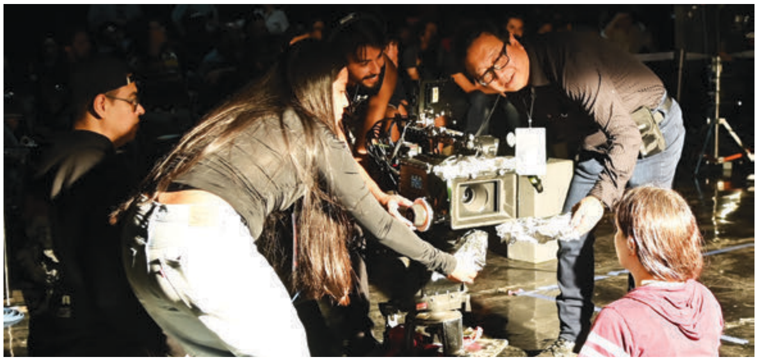
Over the following days, several ASC members participated in panels and conducted seminars at the CCC; Churubusco Studios; and at the rental, production and post company Simplemente. Simmons and Hofmann led an event titled "From Dream to Set: How to Build Your Career as a Cinematographer," during which they screened the feature *Wrong Address* (directed by Simmons and shot by Rashad Lewis); after the screening, the pair conducted a panel with CCC director Dinorath Ramirez and the school's research and promotion subdirector, Claudia Prado, followed by an audience Q&A. Goi presided at several informative gatherings, including a seminar titled "Filming with a Single Light: How Simplicity Creates Atmosphere" and a meeting on "AI in Cinematography" that he presented with director Ellenor Argyropoulos. Fierberg led a hands-on workshop on lighting for digital cinema and film where participants could engage in live demonstrations. **Alejandro Martínez, ASC, AMC** conducted a Master Class on cinematography processes that included a lighting workshop. Riestra conducted a panel titled "Embracing Latin American Perspectives"; Prieto discussed his lighting and use of LUTs on the feature *Killers of the Flower Moon*; and Varese led a workshop on lighting and optics.

The week's program also offered a variety of other workshops and seminars led by members of the AMC, the Chilean Society of Cinematographers (ACC), the Brazilian Society of Cinematographers (ABC) and IMAGO president Mustapha Barat, ABC at additional venues, including the National School for Cinematic Arts (ENAC) and the Churubusco Country Club. Several seminars offered explorations of virtual production; these included a session hosted by Simplemente, conducted by company co-founder Mónica Reina and *American Cinematographer* virtual-production editor Noah Kadner, as well as "The Present and Future of Virtual Production," a discussion between Goi and Kadner.

The Society's activities were sponsored by Hawk, Nanlux and Tilta, with significant support from Arri, CTT EXP & Rentals, EFD, Revolution 435 and Simplemente. During the trip, a Society group that included Simmons, Goi, Figueras, Pizzello and Ibañez were also invited to visit CTT, where they were received with great hospitality by the company's director, María de Jesús Garcia, and her staff, who led a personal tour of the company's facilities.

Top, left: Hofmann peers into the custom-made award presented to him by the AMC. Top, right: Accompanied by his wife, María (left), and surrounded by family and friends, Hofmann enjoys his spotlight. Middle: Well-wishers from the ASC, AMC and other societies surround the honoree onstage. Bottom, left and right: Rodrigo Prieto, ASC, AMC speaks during a panel that followed the tribute ceremony.

simplemente



Top, left: Checco Varese, ASC fields a question during his workshop. Top, right: Steven Fierberg, ASC makes a point during his presentation. Second row, left: Alejandro Martínez, ASC, AMC analyzes an image. Second row, right: Michael Goi, ASC, ISC demonstrates a lighting technique. Third row: Simmons and Hofmann pose with the audience after a screening and panel at the CCC. Bottom: Posing for a group photo at the CCC are (from left) *AC* circulation director Saul Molina; AMC Co-President Diana Garay; ASC general manager Delphine Figueras; Hofmann; Simmons; CCC director Dinorath Ramírez; *AC* editor-in-chief Stephen Pizzello; cinematographer Sandra De Silva De La Torre, AMC and *AC* ad-sales director Michael Ibañez.

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Canon
Canon
EOS
C

Canon | 2 Solutions, Updates

The Canon EOS C50 is a cinema camera featuring a 7K full-frame CMOS sensor, 7K 60P internal Raw recording and 32-megapixel still-photo capture. It features a detachable top handle that adds two full-size XLR audio inputs, a start-stop button and a zoom rocker. It also features an RF-mount, lending it native compatibility with a variety of Canon lenses. The CMOS sensor is capable of a dual-base ISO of 800 and 6,400 in Canon Log 2 and 12-bit Cinema Raw Light recording at up to 7K 60P. The camera is the first in the Cinema EOS lineup to feature full-frame 3:2 open-gate recording.

The new Canon RF-Mount RF85mm *f*/1.4 L VCM Hybrid lens is designed for users who shoot stills and video.

Firmware updates scheduled for select Cinema EOS cameras in late 2025 will enable full-frame 3:2 open-gate recording (EOS C400), view assist in media mode, quality improvement of focus peaking, improved assign buttons, and improved joystick operability (EOS C80 and EOS C400), among other enhancements.

For more information, visit usa.canon.com.

Nikon
NIKKOR
Z

Nikon | ZR

The Nikon ZR is a lightweight, full-frame camera that can record up to 6K/60p (59.94p) and incorporates the new 12-bit R3D NE Raw video file format with Red color science, based on Red's R3D Raw codec.

The 4" DCI-P3 LCD is bright enough to be used in direct sunlight while often eliminating the need for an external monitor. The camera's audio capabilities include 32-bit float audio from built-in and external microphones, plus Ozo directional audio. The ZR also has 7.5 stops of built-in image stabilization, and the wide Nikon Z mount enables a variety of lenses to be adapted using third-party lens adapters.

Support for Log3G10 and the RedWideGamutRGB gamut reproduces exposure standards and colors consistent with Red color science. Two base ISO sensitivities are available, ISO 800 and ISO 6,400. However, just like RedCode Raw, ISO in R3D NE files is fully adjustable in post. Users also have the option to shoot in N-Raw, ProRes Raw and other formats.

The camera features a view-assist function that allows users to store up to 10 LUTs in the camera. Three types of LUT data (17-point, 33-point, 65-point) can be loaded into the camera. A digital accessory shoe enables two-way digital communication between the camera and compatible accessories.

For more information, visit nikon.com.

Red Digital Cinema | V-Raptor XE

Red Digital Cinema's V-Raptor XE is a streamlined version of its V-Raptor [X] cinema camera.

The XE retains the 8K large format (VV) global shutter sensor in the V-Raptor [X] series and will offer improved boot time as well as sensor optimization for more efficient use of power (via an upcoming firmware update). The XE is available with RF Mount or Nikon Z Mount.

For more information, visit red.com.

RED DIGITAL CINEMA
1/4-20
V-RAPTOR
1/4-20
XE

Ikegami | 2 Solutions

Ikegami's IPX-100 IP-oriented mini base station combines the core features of the BSX-100 base station with media-over-IP support, serving as a bridge between SDI and IP production infrastructure. A Unicam camera can feed into an IPX-100 with up to 2.2 miles of conventional SMPTE-hybrid fiber cable. The camera head is powered by the IPX-100. An integral test-signal generator allows system configuration before a camera or other SDI source is connected. Support is also included for auxiliary data to and from the camera. An HD-SDI video monitoring output allows direct connection of a field monitor to the IPX-100, facilitating initial setup. Connecting an Ikegami OCP-300 or OCP-500 panel via Ethernet to the IPX-100 enables zoom and focus control of a remote camera even if an IP connection to the wider ST 2110 infrastructure is not yet established.

Ikegami's VFE-P711AD 7" high-resolution OLED multi-format on-camera viewfinder is compatible with all Unicam-XE and Unicam-HD cameras. An integrated waveform monitor and vectorscope plus audio-level metering enhance the solution's operability in the field. All accessories that fit the VFL-P700AD LCD model are compatible with the new OLED viewfinder.

For more information, visit www.ikegami.com.

Bright Tangerine | Create Shoulder Rig

Bright Tangerine's Create Shoulder Rig has a multi-standard mount for Arca, DJI and Manfrotto dovetail plates and a magnetic shoulder pad made of EVA foam. For static shots, users can transition to the Create Baseplate, a fixed baseplate with 15mm rod support.

For more information, visit brighttangerine.com.

Arri | Live Production Monitor

Arri's Live Production Monitor is a 10" onboard display and control interface that complements the Alexa 35 Live camera and LPS-1 Live Production System.

The LPM-1 provides a bright touchscreen display, built-in tally and camera channel number display, four assignable user buttons, and rotary knobs for direct control of contrast, brightness, color and peaking. Arri has also released the Monitor Yoke Support, providing one-handed maneuverability as well as a NATO rail for easy sliding back and forth.

For more information, visit arri.com.

Tilta | Hydra x Dan Ming Speed-Pan System

The Tilta Hydra x Dan Ming Speed Pan System allows users to capture high-speed pans through the precise control of a wireless follow-focus motor.

The foundation of the system is a rotatable base with geared teeth for a focus motor to rotate. Cameras with a small form factor like action cameras or DSLRs can then be mounted via a quick-release plate. The base also features an adjustable tilt axis, which helps with framing and creating unique angles. At the bottom of the base are three NATO rails that can be used to attach articulating arms and suction cups, as well as other custom support systems.

For more information, visit tilta.com.

Wooden Camera | Fujifilm GFX Eterna 55 Solutions

Wooden Camera's Accessory Collection for the Fujifilm GFX Eterna 55 includes power solutions, mounting points all around the camera, and a modular top plate.

A D-Box System features a choice of a Gold Mount or V-Mount D-Box, a power strip, a link cable and a D-Box support bracket. The D-Box provides reliable power distribution to accessories, while the power strip integrates with the modular top plate for a streamlined setup. The D-Box Support bracket secures the D-Box to the riser plate, preventing the D-Box from disconnecting from the camera. From the modular top plate to the rear NATO rail and side NATO rails, each design works around the features of the camera and provides mounting points.

For more information, visit woodencamera.com.

Leitz Cine | Hektor Primes, 40mm Hugo

Leitz Cine has released Hektor prime lenses, for cameras using mirrorless mounts, in six focal lengths: 18mm, 25mm, 35mm, 50mm, 73mm and 100mm, all T2.1. The user-interchangeable mount options include E, L, RF and Z.

The look of Hektor was inspired by classic M lenses from the 1930s and 1950s, as well as Petzval lenses. These characteristics were achieved by employing non-aspherical designs reminiscent of the 1980s/'90s. Modern touches include coatings that control veiling glare as well as significantly reduced chromatic aberration. Hektor lenses are fully manual and feature an 80mm outer diameter. The 25-100mm lenses have a 77mm screw-in filter thread. Focus- and iris-ring locations match for quick lens changes with 120-degree and 49-degree rotations, respectively.

Leitz Cine has also added a 40mm (T1.5) lens to its Hugo series, which now comprises 14 focal lengths.

For more information, visit leitz-cine.com.

Venus Optics | Mount Options, Solutions

Venus Optics' Laowa 8-15mm full-frame zoom fisheye lens is now available in GFX and XCD mount options. The lens offers both a 180-degree circular fisheye and a diagonal fisheye effect. It has been available in Sony E, Nikon Z, L mount and Canon RF since its introduction.

The Laowa Sunlight T4.5 2x FF Anamorphic Zoom Series, comprising a 40-80mm and a 70-135mm, achieves its 2x anamorphic character through a front anamorphic design while maintaining a compact, lightweight build. A calibrated parfocal design ensures consistent focus throughout the zoom range.

The Laowa 180mm Ultra Macro APO lens combines a 1.5x magnification, advanced apochromatic optics and a compact form factor. It offers a minimum focusing distance of 1'. Features include autofocus on selective mount options.

For more information, visit venuslens.net.

Cooke | Panchro 65/i

Cooke Optics has begun shipping Panchro 65/i prime lenses.

Designed for 65mm and larger-format cinematography, the series comprises six focal lengths: 30mm, 40mm, 55mm, 75mm, 100mm and 152mm. All focal lengths are available now except for the 152mm, which will ship in spring 2026.

For more information, visit cookeoptics.com.

Sony | FE 100mm f/2.8 Macro GM OSS

Sony Electronics' FE 100mm *f*/2.8 Macro GM OSS medium-telephoto macro lens, the latest addition to the G Master series, is compatible with α (Alpha) E-mount cameras and achieves a maximum magnification of 1.4x. With an optional teleconverter (sold separately), it offers up to 2.8x magnification.

The lens offers three focus-dedicated features: a "Full-time DMF switch" enables instant manual focus by rotating the focus ring, even in AF mode; the "Focus Mode switch" allows instant switching between AF and MF; and the "Sliding Focus Ring" enables full MF mode, linked to the distance and magnification scales.

For more information, visit electronics.sony.com.

DZOFilm | Vespid 2 Primes

DZOFilm's Vespid 2 T1.9 prime-lens series incorporates new Definitive Precision Grinding ASPH with multi-layer nano coatings to minimize reflections and stray light. The series (18mm, 24mm, 35mm, 50mm, 85mm and 105mm) supports sensors up to 46.5mm, including Red V-Raptor VV, Arri Alexa LF and Sony Venice, with additional compatibility for select medium-format systems.

The Cooke/i protocol enables real-time metadata integration with Arri, Red, Blackmagic, Sony and Canon cameras. A five-pin Lemo interface supports future wireless follow-focus systems and professional accessories.

Weighing 28.2 ounces each with an 80mm front diameter and length, Vespid 2 primes are suited for use with DJI Ronin 4D, gimbals, handheld rigs and drones.

For more information, visit dzofilm.com.

Viltrox | 5 Solutions

Viltrox AF 56mm *f*/1.2 Pro E and XF (APS-C) lenses are designed with 13 elements in eight groups, achieving high aberration control and bokeh control even when used wide open. The aspherical lens works together with an extra-low dispersion lens that effectively corrects axial chromatic aberration, delivering crisp, color-fringe-free images. Viltrox's HyperVCM motor provides faster, more precise focusing while reducing vibration.

The Viltrox AF 9mm *f*/2.8 Air for APS-C cameras offers a 113.8-degree field of view (equivalent to 13.5mm). The optical design includes 13 elements in 11 groups, with three ED lenses, three HR lenses and two aspherical lenses. It weighs 6.17 ounces in E and XF mounts and has a minimum focus distance of 5" and 0.15x magnification.

The Viltrox AF 14mm *f*/4.0 Air for full-frame camera systems has a 112-degree field of view and features a 12-element, nine-group design — four ED, two HR and two aspherical lenses. It weighs 6 ounces in FE mount and 6.5 ounces in Z mount and features a minimum focusing distance of 5" with 0.23x magnification.

The Viltrox Spark Z3 TTL flash is a pocket-size solution that combines intelligent automation and precise manual control. It's available in dedicated versions for Nikon and Fujifilm, with Sony and Canon versions also planned.

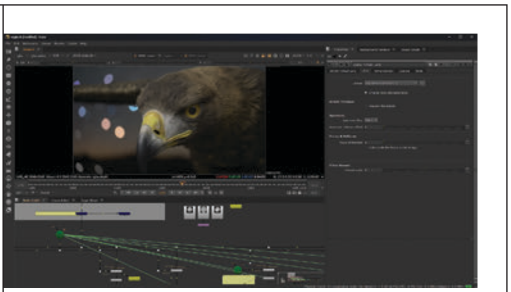
For more information, visit viltrox.com.

Lensworks | X65 Primes

The Lensworks X65 large-format prime-lens series is engineered for today's advanced digital-cinema cameras, offering full open-gate coverage for Arri Alexa 65 and Blackmagic 17K sensors.

Designed and manufactured at Lensworks Rentals' Burbank facility, the series is available for purchase and rental. It encompasses 10 focal lengths ranging from 28mm to 180mm.

For more information, visit lensworksrentals.com.



Zeiss | Beta Testers Wanted

Zeiss is seeking professional VFX artists to join the closed beta-testing phase of CinCraft Virtual Lens Technology, which brings authentic lens characteristics to compositing and visual-effects workflows. The technology introduces a one-click lens characteristic simulator that replicates the behavior of real-world optics within a 2D compositing environment.

The closed beta program will run from December 2025 through February 2026.

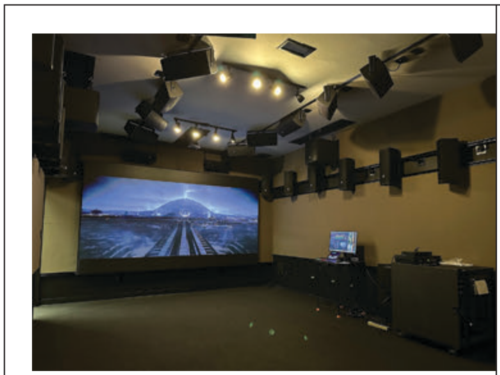
For more information, visit zeiss.com.

NantStudios | Dynamic Volume System

NantStudios' Stage 2 in El Segundo, California, showcases a reconfigurable dynamic volume system.

The system incorporates 2,336 Aoto RM1.5 LED displays. Built on WallPods, a modular LED system designed for rapid reconfiguration, the NantStudios DVS enables full mobility with omni-directional wheels and features auto-leveling sensors that guarantee stability during adjustments.

For more information, visit nantstudios.com.

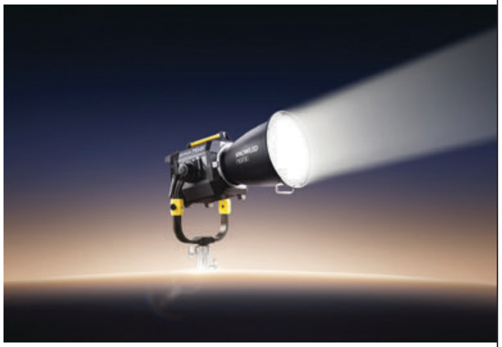


ASG | Burbank Office

Advanced Systems Group, LLC has opened a 5,000-square-foot-facility in Burbank that serves as the company's anchor space in L.A. for testing, demonstrating systems and hosting industry gatherings.

Located at 2152 N. Lincoln St., the space features a Dolby Atmos demo theater, a video-production space with a hard cyc wall, a large video-conferencing room, a staging space, equipment inventory and offices.

For more information, visit asgllc.com.

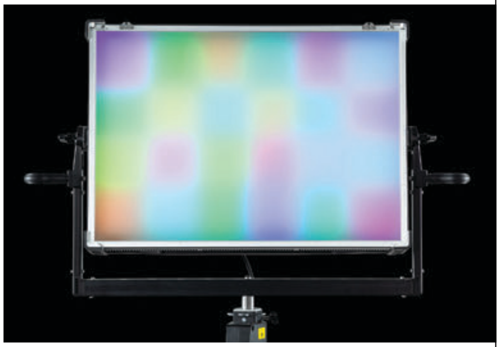


Godox | MG4K

The Godox MG4K is a compact light that delivers 25,600 lux at 5,600K (at 16'5") using a 30-degree reflector. It features a CCT range of 2,800-10,000K with precise ±100-percent Green/Magenta adjustment and incorporates an advanced cooling system. Full compatibility with the G-Mount accessory ecosystem enables flexible configurations.

The MG4K weighs 22 pounds without the yoke and 27.5 pounds with the yoke. Its compact size allows operation by a single person.

For more information, visit godox.com.



Creamsource | Vortex24 Soft

The Creamsource Vortex24 Soft is a 1,950-watt native soft light that delivers over 190,000 lumens across a 110-degree beam. As a native soft source, it can be placed closer to camera and talent in space-constrained stages and reduce the number of fixtures required for soft boxes or overhead rigs.

For more information, visit creamsource.com.

Elation Lighting | Paragon LT

The Elation Paragon LT is a long-throw LED profile luminaire designed for large productions and stadium shows.

Its 1,300-watt variable CRI white LED engine delivers up to 52,000 lumens. With an 8" front lens and a zoom range of 3.7-48 degrees, the solution delivers both sharp, punchy beams and soft, wide washes. It features three gobo wheels, a full animation wheel, overlapping dual prisms, dual frosts and a high-speed iris.

For more information, visit elationlighting.com.

Nanlux, Nanlite | 4 Solutions

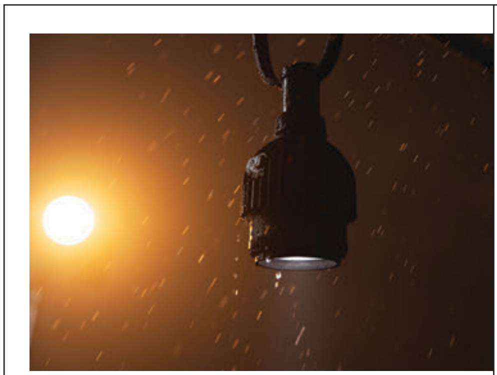
The Nanlux Evoke 150C and Evoke 600C feature the Nebula C8 light engine, which integrates deep red, red, amber, lime, green, cyan, blue and indigo emitters to cover the visible color spectrum.

The Evoke 150C is a 150-watt, full-color light that can run off AC, V-mount batteries or USB-PD power. Its lightweight metal build is IP66-rated. It uses the new FE mount, which has automated modifier recognition and control with appropriate attachments and is also compatible with the existing FM-mount accessory ecosystem.

The Evoke 600C is a full-color point-source light that features the new BE mount, which can recognize compatible modifiers and control an optional motorized Fresnel. It's compatible with a wide range of Bowens-mount accessories; via an adapter, it's also compatible with NL-mount modifiers.

The Nanlite Miro 30c and Miro 60c are compact, round panel lights equipped with the Nebula C4 Light Engine. The solutions feature stepped yokes, allowing multiple tilt angles. They can be powered via PD adapters or NP-F batteries and can illuminate subjects as key lights or serve as an ambient wash. The 30c has an emitting surface of 6.5", and the 60c has an emitting surface of 8.2". Each fixture is equipped with a 45-degree focusing lens.

For more information, visit nanlux.com and nanliteus.com.



Astera | SolaBulb

Astera's SolaBulb offers a compact form factor, an output equivalent to a 50-watt PAR and 15-50-degree zoom capability.

It features Astera's Titan RGBMA LED engine and an optical system that enables users to rotate the front barrel to adjust the beam. The built-in PAR20 Fresnel lens provides even distribution and shadow quality that feels cinematic while maintaining the footprint of a PAR30-style bulb. Optimized for maximum Lux output, the SolaBulb integrates into practicals, lanterns and architectural fixtures while also serving as a controllable downlight. Its beam can be further shaped with the included SolaSnoot accessory.

For more information, visit astera-led.com.

Movavi | Video Editor Update

Movavi has added a Copy-Paste Effects tool to the Movavi Video Editor. The new tool enables users to quickly apply the same effects across multiple video clips and audio tracks. Previously, content creators had to adjust each clip, manually applying effects one by one. In addition to general effects, Copy-Paste Effects works with advanced video-editing tools such as color correction and slow motion.

For more information, visit movavi.com.

Teradek | Bolt 6 XT 10K RX

The Teradek Bolt 6 XT 10K RX is a zero-delay wireless video receiver with a range of up to 10,000' over 5GHz and 6GHz frequencies. It integrates a directional antenna specifically designed for superior RF performance, and its all-in-one enclosure design not only boosts range and reliability in challenging RF environments, but also eliminates the hassle of external antenna cables. The receiver is compatible with all Bolt 6 and Bolt 4K transmitters. It features two 12G-SDI outputs and one HDMI output and includes either Gold Mount or V-Mount battery plates.

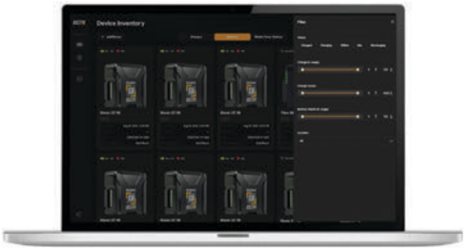
For more information, visit teradek.com.

MSE | 2 Solutions

Matthews Studio Equipment's Location MERF offers the same build and design of the original Mini Extendable Reverse Folding Stand but adds several in-the-field conveniences. It comes standard with MSE's exclusive Rocky Mountain Leg that extends up to 3", providing level setup on uneven terrain. For secure mounting and handling, there's a knurled baby pin undercut with a textured grip. A new knurled ¼"-20 tapped baby pin is ready to attach accessories or to screw on a camera.

The MSE Rolling C+Stand Kit Bag (Greyscale Camo Edition) is built from heavy-duty, water-resistant camo fabric. Inside there's room for 20" and 40" Matthews C+ (Turtle) Stands complete with grip heads and arms, along with larger essentials up to 49" long, such as a Matthews Mini Boom or Baby Boom.

For more information, visit msegrip.com.



Anton/Bauer | Fleet Management

Anton/Bauer Fleet Management is a free, cloud-based system that monitors the health, status and usage of every connected Anton/Bauer smart battery and charger. The platform is accessible from any web browser and enables proactive maintenance, seamless firmware updates, and smarter planning for capital investment.

Fleet Management is the first release from Anton/Bauer's new engineering team, which integrates the company's power expertise with Teradek's background in advanced cloud and data systems.

For more information, visit antonbauer.com.

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Wrap Shot

Young Frankenstein

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Dr. Frederick Frankenstein (Gene Wilder) prepares to bring the Monster (Peter Boyle) to life.

Director Mel Brooks revels in poking fun at traditional genres and classic stories while clearly holding them in the highest regard. He and the crew of the lauded 1974 spoof *Young Frankenstein* took pains to craft a deeply funny tale that sneaks in much respectful homage to *Frankenstein*, James Whale's 1931 horror classic starring Boris Karloff, shot by Arthur Edeson, ASC. While the (well-accomplished) goal was laughter, behind that was admiration and a commitment to meticulous filmmaking that mirrored that of the original.

Gerald Hirschfeld, ASC shared his recollections of shooting the black-and-white period piece — which follows the descent into madness of Dr. Frederick Frankenstein (or "Fronkensteen," rather; played by Gene Wilder) — in an article the cinematographer penned for *AC*'s July 1974 issue. Here are some of the highlights:

- "*Young Frankenstein* incorporated more photographic and special effects than any other film I've ever worked on. The range was tremendous, from trick candle effects to 500,000-volt electrical discharges, from low-hanging fog to torrential rain. Chases, explosions, and fire of past films seemed like child's play by comparison."
- "But wherein the 'book of rules' does it say, 'Make all motion pictures in color'? If it was correct, as it was many years ago, to use a 'soft focus' lens for a close-up, we don't arbitrarily throw that out in favor of one so critically sharp, as the new lenses are, that the skin pores will show; we add diffusion to once again soften the lens. Similarly, if it's right for a story to be photographed in black-and-white we shouldn't arbitrarily shoot it in color. I found, after viewing a few days of dailies, that the black-and-white not only seemed right, but it actually enhanced the feeling and mood of *Young Frankenstein*."
- "In order to give the monster that Dr. Frankenstein creates a different look, Bill [makeup creator William Tuttle] designed a green makeup. The green color, in black-and-white, gave the skin a 'dead' look; it worked fine. However, my problem was that the film was more sensitive to that green color than to normal flesh tones. The monster always required a lower-intensity key light to bring him into balance with the other players, or he had to be netted down by a moving net guided by the key grip. Since all good monsters have larger-than-normal frontal lobes, ours was no exception. In order to bring out the protuberances and throw the eyes into mysterious shadows, the monster's key light was kept very high, often hanging from the ceiling — not too easy to do, but the look was right."
- "For some of our scenes in which the townspeople were hunting down the monster, [production designer] Dale Hennesy designed a forest set that would chill the blood of a modern-day Dracula. It was about 40' in depth and about 100' long; we ran a dolly track parallel to it and made believe we were a train. But, in order to give the illusion of speed, the camera was run at eight frames per second and the dolly grip ran as fast as he could. We ended up with an effective 30-miles-per-hour process plate, but it was only about 12' in length! This would last only eight seconds when projected at 24 frames per second — hardly enough for a minute-and-a-half scene."

— Andrew Fish

To learn (or revisit) how the filmmakers solved this latter dilemma — and for many other insights into the making of Young Frankenstein *— read the full piece here:*

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